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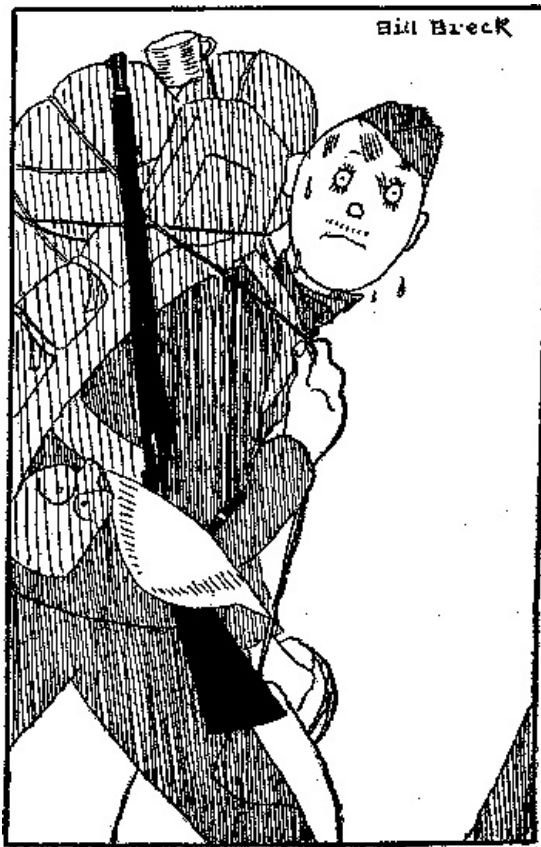
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\*\*\* START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK "SAME OLD BILL, EH MABLE!" \*\*\*





"MARCHED TILL MY PACK GAINED A  
HUNDRED AN FIFTY POUNDS"

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*"Same old Bill,  
eh Mable!"*

BY

**EDWARD STREETER**

27TH (N.Y.) DIVISION

Author of "Dere Mable," "Thats me all over, Mable"

WITH 27 ILLUSTRATIONS IN BLACK-AND-WHITE BY

**G. WILLIAM BRECK**

(*"Bill Breck"*)

27th (N.Y.) DIVISION



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## PREFACE

The rightful place for a preface is at the end of a book or, better still, the scrap basket. My only reason for setting it here is lest someone read and, misunderstanding, take offense.

Not for one moment has there been any thought of making light of that splendid, almost foolhardy, bravery which has characterized the American soldier. It was he himself who made light of it, as he did of the whole war, and probably would of doomsday.

Nor is there anything unkind or deprecating in his attitude toward the Frenchman. He met a race so distinct from his in ideals and customs that there was no basis for understanding. Failing to understand, he followed his usual rule in such instances and laughed.

One of those veterans of a dozen battles, chancing to glance over these pages, may say that the dangers and horrors of those last five months have been underrated. They, however, belong to a comparatively small and enviable minority. Those who turned the tide in July, 1918, and who knocked the line at St. Mihiel into its proper place in September, also bore the brunt on the Meuse and the dreary mud-spattered monotony of the Army of Occupation. The great mass of the American army saw but a few brief weeks of fighting during October and November. Thousands of other Bills, equally brave and more eager because it was denied them, never heard the sound of guns except on the target range.

This is not a treatise on International Relations. It is not a chronology of battles. It is not a memorial of brave deeds. It is merely a few impressions of Pvt. William Smith, Buck, placed in a situation so new, so incomparable, that it had wiser men than he guessing. He was one of those who left their reasons for being "there" to be analyzed by men not so occupied in the business of keeping alive. He would have been bored to death if you had tried to explain them to him anyway. His loyalty and patriotism were so unquestioned that its discussion was absurd. Sentimental, yet so sensitive to obvious sentimentality that he died many times making fun of the things that he was dying for.

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## ***"Same Old Bill, Eh Mable!"***

*Dere Mable:*

Were in sunny France at last. I cant tell you much about it yet on account of its havin been so foggy since we got here. We didnt deboat in Paris as I was expectin. We sailed up a river to a town with a wall around it and got off there. I dont know what the wall was for unless to keep people in. They certinly wouldnt need one to keep anybody out of that place. Were now in what they call a rest camp. If this is restin then all they say about war is true.

For the last two days weve been unpackin boats. You havnt any idear how refreshin it is to pile up about 5 milyon cases of corn Willie. Ive been puttin on weight ever since I got here but its all been on my back.

Some of the fellos think they got us mixed up with one of these Steva Dora regiments. It dont seem to worry the Captin much. Theres no reason it should tho. All he has to do is to sit on a box an keep the quartermaster from gettin over-stocked on cigars.

The day we got in they tied us out in the middle of the river. They left us there so long that there was a roomer the war was over an we was goin to turn around an go home. When it comes to takin that trip right over agen I say on with the war.

We lay around there so long I was beginnin to feel like the keeper of a light ship. Then they got into an awful hurry all of a sudden an piled pretty near the whole boat load onto one coal barge. Our Bilitin officer met us at the dock. Hed been over here a month gettin things fixed up for us. From the way he acted youd think he was the fello that invented the war.

After that we got out in the country and marched till my pack gained a hundred an fifty pounds an my tung was lyin on my chest. Joe said we needed a rest camp after a hike like that. When wed walked about six miles, or killen meters as they call them over here, we turned into a bare field. The Bilitin officer said that was the camp.

Just then it started to rain. The Captin told the Top to make us all comfortable. Then he remembered some business in town and went away before he had a chance to hear any first impreshuns about rest camps. The Bilitin officer must have wore himself out findin us a nice place like this with only a month to do it in. Id like to see what hed turn out if he only had a couple of days. It rained all night. When I get home Ill be able to put in a good night in the swimmin pool of a Turks bath.

The next mornin we started in on intensive restin. We unpacked a whole boat out onto a dock. Then some General came along. I guess he thought we still looked a little peaked. He says "Just run that stuff into the shed across the tracks." The place he called a shed would have made a nice hanger for the New York Central stashun.

They tell me now were not goin right up to the front. We got to go to school agen to learn something. If I had a diploma for every school I been to in the last year my room would look like a dentle parlor.

The French seem glad to see us but they cant express themselves very well. They dont seem to talk the same kind of French the fello learned us in the Y.M.C.A. last winter. There all mixed up on there money too. About the only way a fello can buy anything is to hold out all hes got and let them take what they want. I guess theyll never overcharge me by takin all I can hold out.

The whole sistem is based on the Sue, Mable. As near as I can make out a Sue aint worth anything. A hundred Sues make a Centimeter an a hundred Centimeters make a Frank. Five Franks make a dollar only now they dont. That gives you an idear how simple it is to go into a store an figger what you can buy with a quarter.

I hear the battery comin back so I guess Ill quit this and fall in on the tail of the colyum. It isnt that I wouldnt just as soon have them all know where Ive been, but it makes the Captin feel a lot better to have me there at formashuns.

Yours if I survive the rest  
*Bill*

*Dere Mable:*

If you ever have to do any travelin in France, walk. I dont suppose you ever took a five day trip in an open trolley. We traveled five days an all the time straight away from the front. First we thought we was goin to Italy but we must have passed that long ago. They finally landed us in a little town with about a hundred people, fifty cows an no pictur show. The more I see of this country the more patriotic I get.

The train we came down on looked like one I had when I was a kid on tracks. You felt somebody ought to get out an wind the engine every time it stopped. Whenever we got to stashuns a lot of fellos in long coats would come out an blow whissels. Sometimes wed start but most of the time nothin happened. At last I found a job for the Top sargent when the war is over.

The cars are marked 1st, 2nd an 3rd class. The difference is that the wheels on the 1st class has only got one flat side. The 2nd class has got two, an the 3rd class wheels are square. We ride in the 3rd class. Luckily the cars has only got four wheels. There so short you couldnt get any more under them if you wanted to.

There freight cars are all Ford models to. On the doors they got painted "Hommes 40 Chevaux 8." Thats French for 40 men an 8 horses. That struck me as funny till I figgered out that they probably pack five men between each horse sos they wont rattle round so much.

Of course nobody could ever collect tickets on a train like this. So they got a saloon in every stashun insted of a ticket office. They make the road pay on those. The first time we stopped Angus got off an bought a bottle of Vinrooge wine. Thats a drink the French use. They must wash in it to cause I havnt seen any water since I been here.

Marv Motel, one of the new fellos in the battery, said if you could get two or three quarts of that under your belt it would act like a couple of bottles of beer an help you to sleep. So at the next stashun Angus got enuff for three quarts apiece.

The Vinrooge wine acted the way Marv said it would only he must have meant two cases of beer insted of two bottles. It put everybody to sleep like an anesthetic but Angus. He kept awake to finish what was left. The last I saw of him he was singin Skotch songs out the windo at the Engineer. One nice thing about these trains is the Top cant get at you between stashuns.

You ought to have seen that bunch the next mornin. It would have been an awful encouragin site for the Kiser. Everybody had a beard on both sides of his face, inside an out an they wasnt talkin any more than was necessary to call somebody something.



**"EVERYBODY HAD A BEARD ON BOTH SIDES OF HIS FACE"**

About noon they got us out at some stashun sos the Captin could give us the devil for not keepin neat an clean. Nobody minded much cause he didnt look as tho hed spent the night in no dry cleaners himself.

Well, Mable, we just sat there for three days an three nights. I began to think we must be goin home by the overland root. The only reason we didnt murder nobody was because we didnt have room. Every once in a while wed stop at a stashun an some red cross nurses would bring around coffee. Only they wasnt red an they wasnt cross. Most of us was so glad to see a woman that we

could say something to besides "Ah We" that we didnt menshun the coffee. Its funny what youll take from a woman when it would be death for a mess sargent.

The Captin said wed have to stay in this town a week or two on account of the school were goin to bein full. The Bilitin oficer came down ahead as usual. This time he only had two days. After seein what he could do in a month we didnt expect much. We got it. Ten of us are roomin in a hay barn. The only good thing about it is that when your in bed the Top sargent cant tell wether your there or not without takin out all the hay.

As soon as we got here I noticed something awful strong an it wasnt no geranium bed ether. Were getting used to it now. You can tell how rich a Frenchman is by the size of his manure pile. There so proud of them they set them right outside there windos sos they can sit an watch them an never forget them. The bigger the pile the bigger man you are in your home town. All I can say is Im glad the people we live with is poor. Id hate to be bileded with the Mayor.

I got to quit now. The sensor cuts out most of this anyway. They say he tears off half of every letter to lighten the mails.

au reservoir as the French say  
*Bill*

*Dere Mable:*

Id have rote you sooner only the sensor wont let me tell where I am an I couldnt think of nothin else to say. This is the third letter Ive rote since we landed. Im a little worried about the other two cause the Captin said we couldnt menshun the names of no places. So I just addressed them to Mable Gimp, nothin else.

In case you dont receive letters like that I wish youd let me know. Then I wont be expectin any answer. Ritin letters from here is like talkin to a fello over the fone that aint there.

Im having a little trouble with the languige. Its tricky. A lot of these French words is the same as ours only they dont mean the same thing. Like "Pan" an "We" an "Mercy" an "Toot sweet." As soon as I find what the words stand for Ill be all right.

Some of the fellos dont seem to get onto the idear of this thing at all. They think if they talk like they had an egg in there mouth an put in lots of zs its French. Take Joe Loomis for instance. He talks like a German thats lived with the French Canadians for a while. Hell go into a lunch room an say "Geeve me ze beef stak rar, mit ze on-yon." Then he gets sore when they put the wine list in front of him.

It aint the wine list that makes him sore of course. He cant get over the American custom tho of eatin with his meals.

The first three days we was here we didnt have no guns nor horses or nothin. I thought perhaps the Captin would give us a chance to get over that rest camp, but he seems to have an idear tho that just so many of us has got to be killed in the war an the quicker he gets it over with the better. So every day he walks us about ten killen meters with the sun hot enuff to boil eggs.

The guns came yesterday. There painted up like a ten cent sunset. They call them Soizant Cans, whatever kind that is. They look pretty much in the bean blower class to me. One of those guns we left back in the States would take care of the four of them. But of course after polishin those up last winter till I almost wore them out the Captin had to come off an forget them. I guess now were stuck with these.

No horses came with the guns. I suppose we got to pull them around ourselves for the rest of the war. I can just here the Captin tellin Gen. Perishing, "No, no, General. My men havnt got a thing to do. Outside of a couple of single mounts for the oficers I wont need a horse."

I wish your mother could see the wimmin wash close over here. She might get more enjoyment out of that lawndress of hers. There is a lot of summer houses down beside a creek behind the town. Every day they go down there an stand in a barrel right in the creek. First they take the close an drag them around the creek for a while. Then they lay them on a wooden block an beat the buttons off them with a big board. A button in a steam lawndry leads a life of quiet ease compared with these.



**"BEAT THE BUTTONS OFF THEM  
WITH A BIG BOARD"**

After they get them hammered out flat they hang them on a barb wire fence. In the evening they take home anything the cows has left in an old wheelbarro. I guess by that time there dirty enuff to wash agen cause there always washin and you dont see no results.

We spend all our time now drillin with those little guns. Of course there different from those we had in the States so everything we learned over there has to be forgot. As far as I can make out we might as well have learned basket weavin for all the good it did us.

Well, Mable, have as good a time as you can at home. I know how tiresome those broken-winded fellos must be. Id go around with them tho once in a while in case they should ask you. Democratic. Thats me all over, Mable. Its the only thing your father an me has got in common. Besides it will make it seem all the better when I get home.

Yours in spite of these things  
*Bill*

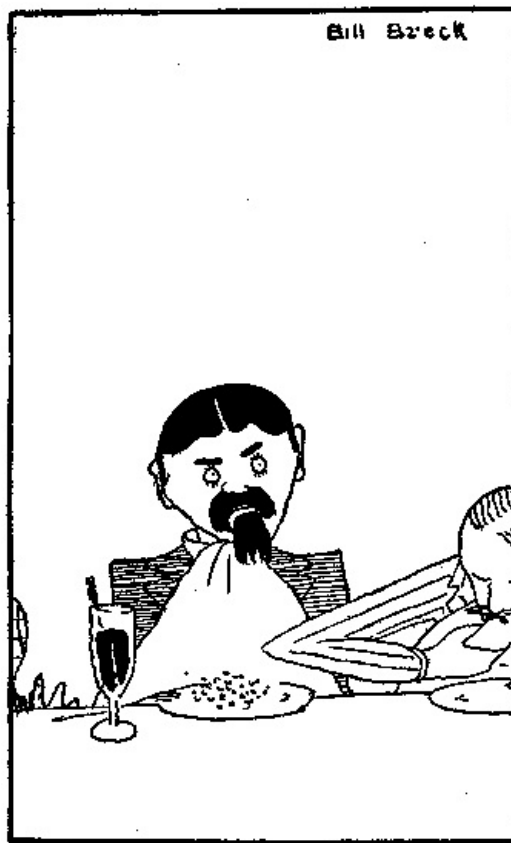
*Dere Mable:*

I guess your last letter must have been sensored to death cause I never got it. I been over here three weeks now an the only letter I got was a bill for some flowers I sent you a year ago. That fello would make more money as a detective then a flowerist. I bet hed have found Charlie Ross if Charlied owed him any money. I expect to be sittin propped up agenst the wall some day in the Old Soldiers Home an about six postmen will come staggerin in the gate with my mail. Keep on ritin tho. I can always turn it over to some historical society.

Saturday an Sunday was the end of the week so the Captin let a few of us go in to a big town near here to take a bath. Hes always tryin to stick a little extra duty like that into a mans private time.

Me an Angus an Marv Motel went down together in a truck. I dont suppose you ever road in a truck with only two other fellos in it. I bet it goes farther up an down then straight ahead. Angus was all for seein the town as soon as we got there, that bein about the only thing that didnt involve spendin money. We compromized by seem the restawrants first.

Its interesting to lissen to the French eat, they enjoy things so. Everyone tucks there napkins under there chins like your father used to before he had a hired girl insted of your mother.



**"EVERYONE TUCKS THERE  
NAPKINS UNDER THERE CHINS"**

The French is awful optimistic eaters. By takin everything separate they can work themselves into believin theyve had a course dinner. If they had such a thing as oatmeal an cream I bet theyd make you eat the oatmeal first an drink the cream afterwards.

Every time you look away you get a clean plate. All you need to start a restawrant in France is a thousand plates an a dozen eggs. The rest of the food doesnt matter much. About everything you ask for is "Defended." That seems to be the same as "Just out" in American. In most places its just a question of how long you can think of things to ask for before you end up with an omlet. The only place you can get real French cookin Mable is in the States.

Theres a bunch of French soldiers in town. Most of them have beards an little bags hangin all over them. I wish theyd let us wear beards. You wouldnt have to go round with your collar buttoned all the time then.

When I first got into town I thought it must be a holiday or something cause the saloons was overflowin right out on the sidewalks. Everybody was sittin round at little tables drinkin beer. I went in one tho an there wasnt a soul inside but flies. It certinly is mixin. In one place a fello wont take a drink unless he can go behind a screen. Over here he wont have it anywhere but in the middle of the street. I can see your father sittin out on Main street in a wicker chair with a stein of beer in his hands.

Well Mable at the rate Im not receivin mail I wont be able to tell wether its last winter or next winter that your talkin about when I finally get your letters. Im going to keep on ritin tho just to annoy the sensor.

Yours in haste  
*Bill*

*Dere Mable:*

In a training camp once more beginin all over agen. If we had a school system like this in civil life a fello would never live to finish high school.

Were not livin in stables any more. They got us now in long stone buildins with wood cots in them. I suppose somebody back at headquarters heard of soft pine an thought it would be a good thing for makin beds. I feel as full of bones as an old herrin.

We didnt have to pull the guns over after all. They tied them on behind trucks. I was makin up a nice bed for myself in the back of a truck when the Captin stuck his head in. He certinly believes in exercisin his neck. As soon as he saw I was comfortable he says "Smith, you ride on the end caisson an watch the brake." There was no use tellin him Id seen the darn thing every day for two weeks. He thinks he knows everything.

Of course youve never ridden on a caisson tied behind a truck. You never went hitchin with a bob sled behind an express train in the middle of summer nether. It was just luck that the old thing



happened to be under me every time I came down. Some times it would go crazy an run from one side of the road to the other like it was lookin for a chance to pass the truck. I dont know what would have happened if the rope hadnt busted. That caisson must have thought it was a tank. It turned right off the road, ran over a little ditch an tried to clime a tree. It didnt have the build tho an quit.

The next thing I remember the Captin was sayin "Smith, what are you tryin to do with that caisson, smash it?" Just as if Id swiped the darn thing to go for a joy ride.

Well, Mable, your letter came at last. From the looks of it they must have dragged the mail bag all the way. That certinly was interestin about that poor young fello Archie Wainwright. It must be awful to have a murmur in your heart when you want to go to war so bad.

Tell him not to worry about missin the war cause when I get back Ill show him so much about it hell feel like a veteran in half an hour an his family will be hangin out a service flag.

We just got ishued two new Lootenants inside of a week. Its gettin harder an harder to rite anything interestin that youll understand. For instance the first Lootenant was a 2nd and the second Lootenant was a 1st. That shows you how tecknickle it all is but of course its over your head like a shower-bath.

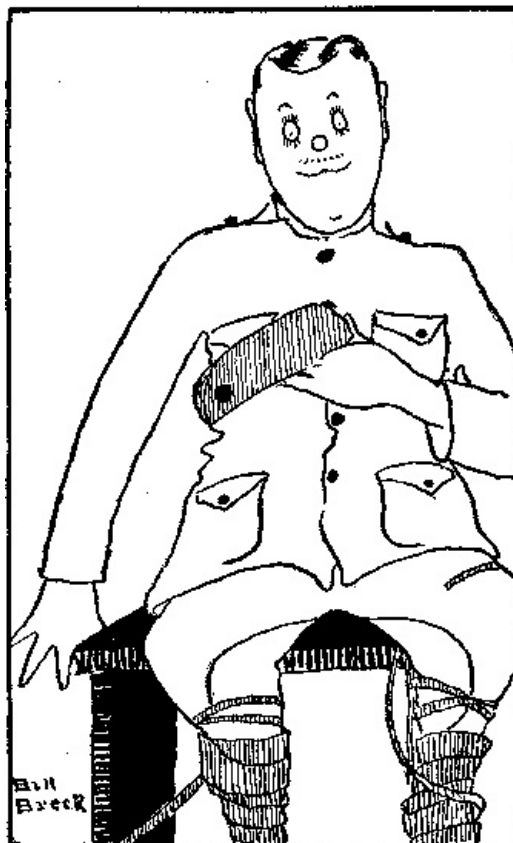
One of the Lootenants came over as a casulty oficer. He just came now from Sam Moores College of Artillery over here in France. They turn them out of there like Fords. If he knows as much as he admits he does I dont see why they bother to put a high priced fello like Fosh in command for.

Were bein learned mostly by French oficers. There awful polite. I wish the Captin could hear them. Joe says he was made a gentleman by an act of Congress when they made him an oficer. Congress certinly has a lot of power in war time.

In the army your not supposed to be able to use anything till you know how its made. You dont know how to put on a gas mask till you know whats in the tin box an who was the first fello to use it. You cant talk over a fone till your able to sit down an make one out of an old cigar box an a piece of balin wire.

I never knew so little about so much in my life. You sit here all day an lissen to a fello tell you how if you multiply something by enuff other things you can hit a Fritz in the stummick three miles away. Everythings tricky about this gun. Insted of shootin where you want to hit like a man you look at a thermometer an a barometer, add em together an look up the result in a little pink almanak. That tells you where to shoot. I dont like this mystick stuff. Frank and straitforward. Thats me all over, Mable.

They just ishued us overseers caps an rapped leggins. Theres one good thing about these overseers caps. You cant put them out of shape like the felt hats cause they never had any shape to begin with. I cant say much in favor of the rapped leggins tho for a fello that never had any experience with first aid or nothin.



**"THEY JUST ISHUED US  
OVERSEERS CAPS AN RAPPED  
LEGGINS"**

I cant see any sense tho in ishuin close like a pictur puzzle. They might just as well ishue your coat an pants in seckshuns an let you hook em together every mornin.

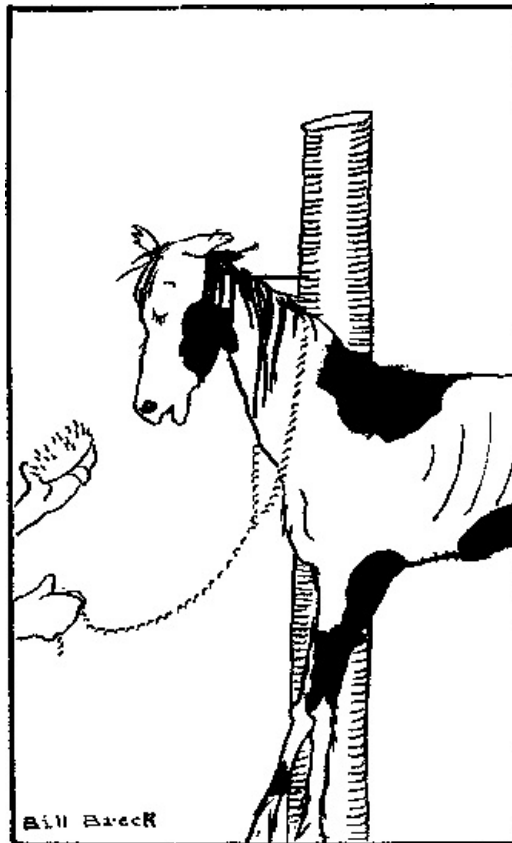
I got to quit now. I was left behind to clean out the barracks an I hear the battery comin in from drill so I got to hussle. Tell Archie to cheer up about the war. When I come home hell be wearin so many wound stripes hell be lookin like a zebra.

Yours till Archie gets a service stripe  
*Bill*

*Dere Mable:*

Theyve made me a door tender to a Soizant Cans. All Ive got to do is to open the door an another fello puts in the shell. Then I close the door an start the shell on its way with a piece of string. Its a pretty important job cause if I dont latch the door the whole works will probably come out the back entrance.

Our horses came today. They must have thought this was a mobile vetrinary hospittle insted of a battery. Whoever grooms those things will have to lean them up agenst something. I read somewhere how the average life of a horse in this war is only 60 days. Accordin to that this bunch has seen about seven weeks service already.



**"WILL HAVE TO LEAN THEM UP  
AGENST SOMETHING"**

Every mornin we go out to the range an shoot away liberty bonds. The good part about shootin into a desert like that is that theres nothin out there to hit so you can call it a bullseye no matter where you land. The oficers just walk around shakin hands an tellin each other what good shots they are. They sit up behind the guns in a place that looks like the press box of a baseball game. It has a nice roof an everything. When it rains they just pull their toes in sos the water wont drip offen the roof on them. Then they say "This is war. We cant stop for a little wet." Every time a fello fires they call it a problem. About the biggest problem is to figger what their firin at.

In the afternoon we go to school. Yesterday a fello gave us a talk on the "Art of Handlin Men." Marv Motel says he knew him in New York. He used to be a rubber in a Turks bath on 42nd street.

Theyve ishued green badges to the fellos that was down on the border. It looks like St. Patricks day around here. Angus MacKenzie that wasnt there calls them horse exercise medals. The day I put mine on the French fello thats learnin us about telefones came up an shook hands with me. All tha Frogs think somebody has sighted us for bravery. Its a good thing nobody knows enuff French to tell them about it.

The French have a medal they call the Crawdy Gare. If you do something pretty good like sittin on a hand granade sos it wont go off an bother the Captin or fieldin a shell right over the kitchin they hang one of these on you. Then if you do somethin awful good like drivin a General fast past a place thats been shelled they let you wear a silver rubber plant on the ribbon.

Were almost ready to go up to the front now. I guess they want to get us there before the horses 60 days is up to save funeral expenses. Just at the last minit they ishued us a lot of replacement troops as if we didnt have enuff to carry. The governmint dont need to waste no tin derbies on that bunch. They certinly looked as if theyd been doin some hard fast travelin when they struck here. All they had was what was on them an that was mostly cooties.

I aint allowed to tell you wether were goin to the front from here or not. I dont see why its such a secret tho cause were so far in the rear here that its about the only way we could go. If you dont here from me for a long time I dont want you to worry cause I may not be killed but just badly wounded or taken prisoner or something. Or there might be just a chance that it was because I was to busy to rite. This door tender job is pretty important. When they get to fightin I guess Ill have to be around most of the time.

Yours till I leave the door unlatched  
*Bill*

*Dere Mable:*

Were on our way to the front. I bet the Kiser an that funny lookin kid of his is gettin there pulmoters out. We traveled three days an two nights on the train an now we been hikin two nights more. I havnt heard a gun yet. I dont think the Captin knows where the front is. Theres a roomer around that we got off at the wrong stashun. I suppose now we got to walk half way across France just because that fello dont know how to read a time table.

They landed us in a field outside of a town. Youd have thought we got off right in front of the Fritz trenches the way the officers acted. The new Lootenant bawled everybody out for not wearin there gas masks at the alert. That means tyin it under your chin like a bib.



**"TYIN IT UNDER YOUR CHIN LIKE A BIB"**

We didnt lose much time unloadin. Nobody knew then but what the Fritzes might want to park a few Berthas right where we were. Then we just sat around in the rain and waited. After about an hour the Captin came splashin down the road an says "Harness an hitch. Come on. Hurry up." He always gives an order as tho hed given it an hour before an nobodied paid any attenshun to him. It didnt sound reasonable to me cause it was gettin dark then an it would be time to turn in before we could get any place. Bein a cannon ear tho an not havin anything to do with the horses I didnt say anything. Willin. Thats me all over, Mable.

After wed got hitched up we stood around for an hour more blottin up rain. The Captin just leaned agenst his horse smokin a cigar as tho that was the best place in the world to spend the evenin. Hes got one of these Drench coats so it doesnt make any difference to him if everybody else dissolved. Just as it was gettin dark a fello came up on a motor cycle an gave him some mail. Then we started. It made the fellos awful sore cause they say thats all he was waitin for. I thought of course the Bilitin officer had found some place that was worse down the road an was takin us there for the nite. But we just marched an marched till everybody could see that the Captin didnt know where he was goin.

We couldnt light a light or scratch matches or nothin. The Captin said a lot of Dutch airypalanes was out to get us an as soon as we struck a light theyd drop bums on us. Then he passed the word back that nobody was to talk above a whisper. The old guns rattle so you couldnt hear anybody unless he yelled anyway. The Captin means all right but he read to much cheap literachoor when he was a kid.

Every few minits a string of trucks would go tearin by in the other direcshun. None of them had any lights. Its lucky they didnt cause if they could have ever seen how near they came to not missin us they could never have got there hair to lie down agen. When we were in camp back in the States you dasnt go over ten miles an hour for fear somebody would fall down in front of you and get run over. When you get over here tho the idear seems to be to make the war as dangerous as you can.

After a while I undid a couple of blanket rolls that didnt seem to belong to anyone an I was just gettin as comfortable as a fello can on top of a caisson in the pourin rain. I was dozin off when I heard someone say "Whos that ridin on that carriage?" There was only one person could ask a question like that. Right away I started to make myself uncomfortable cause I knew thats probably what the trouble was. Then he rode up an says "Is that you Smith? Didnt you hear me order nobody to ride on any of the carriages?" Theres no use arguin with the Captin. Its just a case of "All right. Have it my way."

They go to all the trouble of bildin a seat on these wagons. They spend a year teachin you to sit on it in the most uncomfortable way. Then when the first possible reason for usin them comes along they make everybody get off an walk. I spent the rest of the nite kickin mud puddles off the road.

About dawn we pulled off the road into an orchard an put some branches over the guns to cover up the camooflage paint. I thought after bein up all nite on account of his foolishness the Captin would at least take pity on the horses an let them alone. That would have given us some chance to sleep. Nothin would do tho but that we spend about half the day smoothin them out. He says it makes them feel good. Of course the way we feel hasnt got nothin to do with it.

After wed scoured the horses till they must have been sorer than we were they gave us some monkey meat an let us turn in. Back to the hay barns agen. That Bilitin oficer ought to make good on some board of health when we get home. He can pick out all the worst places in a town ten minites after he gets there.

Sleepin in the daytime is a kind of a joke anyway in the army. Every time you get to sleep the horses has to be fed. And when your not feedin them you got to get up an feed yourself. In the army a fellos hungry when they tell him to eat an no other time.

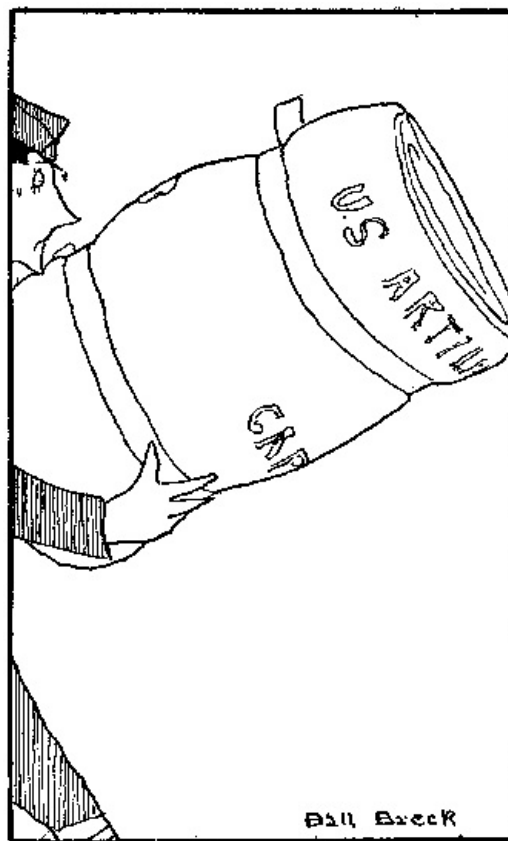
After theyd blown a horn at me about eight different times I figgered I might as well stay up an rite you a letter. Now that were gettin up near the front Im goin to rite just as much as I can. Thats partly sos you wont worry an partly so that if I get knocked off you will have something to amuse you in case you go into a convent.

I had to leave all those sweters an caps an everything that you nitted me last winter. You dont need to feel bad about that tho cause they wouldnt let us wear them anyway. If everybody wore all the stuff thats been nitted for them since the war started this would look more like an ice carnival than an army. Its sentiment that counts, tho, not wool.

In the meantime still  
*Bill*

*Dere Mable:*

After travelin for three nites we dont seem to be any nearer the front than we ever was. Ether the Fritzes are retreatin in trucks or were goin the wrong way. The only reason were not marchin tonite is because when we got into this town the Captin found a chatto for his P.C. P.C. is military, Mable. It means a place for the Captin. Mike Whozis, the Captins orderly, says hes got one of those limosine beds with a roof an sides on it. Its so big it dont make any difference how you lie on it. If all he says about it is true we may stick around for the rest of the war.



**"MIKE WHOZIS, THE CAPTAIN'S  
ORDERLY"**

Well, never mind. Sailor Gare as the French say. That's some old pirate they blame everything on over here.

A bunch of prisoners came in last night. They must have surrounded half the German army cause it looked like a decoration day parade when the M.P. brought them in. If they make another haul like that we'll have about as much to fire at up at the front as we did back on the range. I'd never seen any Fritzes so Angus and I went down to the pen this afternoon to see if they were breaking the child labor law or had any wimmen with machine guns tied to them like you read about.

The pen is just a bunch of barracks not much better than the place where we sleep. They got a lot of barb wire and an M.P. around it. The Fritzes didn't look very wild to me. More like a bunch of stashed porters out of a job. We tried to argue the M.P. into letting a few of them go at a time so we could catch them again but he took the war awful serious.

I got in wrong with the Captain again today. This army is something like gambling. Whichever way you decide you're bound to lose sooner or later. You'd think that the only reason a fellow would give you food was because he expected you to eat it. That's because you don't know the army. The other day they issued each fellow what they called Iron Rations. That means a can of petrified crackers and a can of gold fish. It's not a bad name for the crackers. You're supposed to tote around your Iron Rations with you wherever you go. The only thing is that you mustn't eat them.

When they handed them out the Captain said we wasn't ever to eat them unless we absolutely had to. As if anybody in his right mind would. I'm all for obeying orders though when it doesn't conflict with my duty. Joe Balderose ate his half an hour after breakfast and then wanted me to split with him on mine. I says "No. Not till I absolutely have to. And then I'll be so far gone that you won't have a look in." I waited till half past ten though I was getting awful weak the last half hour. You'd ought to have heard the Captain when he saw me. You'd have thought I was eating some of his old harness.

As far as I can see, Mable, it's just another of his ways of passing the buck. If General Perishing should happen to find one of us starved to death some mornin' he wants to be able to show him we had plenty of food on us when we slipped away. He's smart all right, that fellow.

You can't tell what may happen before I have a chance to write again but we won't cross any bridges before we leap as the poets say.

Yours to the last crum  
*Bill*

*Dere Mable:*

Were on the front at last in what they call a quiet sector. Most of the soldiers round this place is French. I understand they're pretty sore at the Americans cause some of them came up here and began shooting up the Germans. Of course you can't have a decent war if nobody's going to pay any attention to the rules.

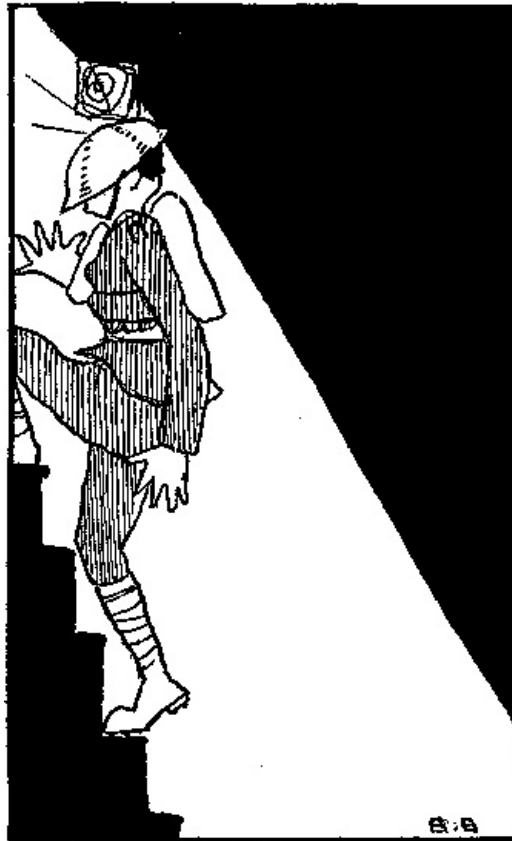
The worst part of the war is gettin to it. I been rained on so much the last week I feel like an old sponge. Every nite weve been marchin along thru the pitch dark with trucks an guns an everything else that rattles poundin along on each side.

Nobody could strike a light durin the whole trip. Then when we get to this place the Frenchmen that we were goin to relieve came out in the road with lanterns to see who we were. Its a wonder the Captin didnt make us crawl up on our hands an knees.

We finally got the guns in posishun. How we found the place in the dark is more than I can tell. Were in the middle of a ruined village. It looks like those picturs of old Greek office buildins that hangs in the high school hall. Its funny, Mable, but the first real rest Ive had since I got in the army is since Ive got to the front. The only livin thing we see is rats an airpylanes. The archies shoot all day at the planes but it dont seem to bother them much. They just sail along like a limosine with a lot of little dogs tryin to bite off the tires. I guess if they ever hit one the shock would kill the gun crew as quick as it would the pilot.

Our guns is pointed at a hill right in front of us. Every mornin we fire a few shots at this an then spend the rest of the day cleanin the guns. If they used these guns as much as they clean them the war would have been over long ago. Toward evenin the Fritzes return the complement. Everybody comes out to see where they land but they must fire them up in the air cause nobodies ever been able to find out yet. When your not cleanin the gun or on gard you have to stay down in your dugout sos the airpylanes wont see you. Theyve got to be awful quick if they want to get a sight of me. Ive got the deepest dugout except for the Captin. When the Top sargent wants a detail you can bet hes not goin to clime down fifty steps after one Buck private.

Ive found the first real use for my tin derby. The fello that invented these dugouts couldnt seem to decide wether to put in stairs or a ladder so he split the difference. Right across the top of the entrance he put a nice sharp beam. Its fixed so that it gets you in the chin goin down an on the top of the head comin up. Hed have split more than the difference long ago if it hadnt been for that tin derby of mine.



**"IVE FOUND THE FIRST REAL USE  
FOR MY TIN DERBY"**

Marv Motel, whats gunner on my piece, is busy all day fixin things up. He says if were goin to be here the rest of our lives we might well have things homelike. He dug up an old rug an a lace curtin somewhere that the Germans had missed. The rug hes got in the gun pit an the curtin over the trail of the gun to set the barrage shell on. They keep a shell ready all the time in case somebody starts a battle without the usual weeks notice. Marvs got it shined up like a young doctors door plate. Every nite he raps it up an put an old one in its place. Angus says when he gets time hes goin to carve the names of the gun crew on the side sos we can take it back an give it to some museum.

Well, Mable, you might as well take down your service flag. I guess the only action Ill ever see is when I get home an meet Archie Wainwright.

Yours till theres something doin  
*Bill*

*Dere Mable:*

Well, you can take your service flag out of moth balls agen. An if the Fritzes try any more monkey business like they did this mornin you can buy a can of radiator paint for the star.

Angus an I was standin outside the dugout finishin our mornin goldfish an plannin a few correkshuns for the army when a boiler exploshun happened right behind us. After things had quieted down a bit I looked out from behind a piece of old stone wall where I seemed to be lyin, to see if there was anything left for identificashun. I saw a foot layin outside the dugout. I knew it belonged to Angus cause hes the only man in the army with one like it. I was just goin to pick it up thinkin his family might like it to remember him by when another foot came out. Then the whole of him. Hed crawled under an old pawlin that had been spread out to dry. This war certinly has proved that fish aint a brain food. Outside of bein a little mussed up from a mud pubdle hed found under the pawlin he seemed all right. When I ast him if he was lookin for anything, tho, he got all worked up. The Skotch is awful emoshunal.

While we was standin there wonderin wether somebodied been smokin in bed in the amunishun dug out another boiler blew up right in front of us. At least I think it was in front as near as I could tell from the bottom of the dug out stairs. Angus saved my life that time cause we both happened to go down the stairs together an I went down on top of Angus.



**"ANOTHER BOILER BLEW UP  
RIGHT IN FRONT OF US"**

Marv Motel was asleep down in the dug out. He got awful sore an wanted to know how a fello was ever goin to get any rest with a bunch of this an that fools rough housin around all day. Then came two more black hand awtrocities. Angus swears the second one rocked the dug out so his mess kit slid right offen the table. Things quieted down after that so we went out finally to see if we could pick up any soovenirs out of the wreck.

Well, Mable, Id have bet anybodies money before I went out that none of those shots had lit more than ten feet away. It took us half an hour tho before we could locate all the holes. When we did they was all about a hundred yards away. The funny part about it was that there was one in front and back an one on each side of the battery.

The Captin came out of his dug-out while we was lookin at them. I guess hed been down there doin some deep thinkin. He looked them over like he was Shylock Homes or somebody. Then he said that was an old Fritz trick to put a shot on all four sides of a battery. Some day when he had lots of amunishun hed split the diference. All I can say is that when he starts splittin Im goin to set a new rekord down these dug out stairs wether Angus is there to ride on or not.

Nothins happened since so weve all been hopin that those was just four old shots that the Germans wanted to get rid of. A truck came in last nite with a lot of bread an a quarter of a cow done up in burlap like summer furniture so everybodies forgot the war in favor of a roast beef dinner.

It certinly is goin to make me laugh, Mable, if I should ever get home an see those sines about

bread all done up in tishue paper what aint never touched human hands since the fello that rapped it up. Over here they handle bread like coal only a little rougher not havin any shoots an things.

Our bread comes in round loaves like the French. Its handier to carry an dont bust so easy when it hits things. Ive seen the doboys bore a hole in the middle and sling a loaf over there shoulder with a piece of string like a pair of feel glasse. I suppose theyll be gettin out an order pretty soon about which side your to wear your bread on.

After all Ive eat tho I aint dead yet. Of course thats no permanent health certifikate.

I started this letter early this mornin. Now its almost nite agen. A fello never can get any work done without gettin interupted in the army. I got to quit now cause I was supposed to relieve Marv Motel on gard half an hour ago sos he could get his supper. I guess he wont mind when he finds out weve gone back to gold fish agen.

yours till they split the diference  
*Bill*

*Dere Mable:*

We fooled the Fritzes by pullin out of that last place before theyd had a chance to split the diference. We came back to this little town for what they call a rest. That word "rest" dont mean the same thing as the one we use. For instance when an oficer comes into the room everybodys supposed to jump up like theyd been sittin on a tack. Then he says "Rest." Youd naturally think he meant lie down an take it easy for an hour or so. All he means is that you dont have to stand like a windo dummie.

An then agen when your standin in line an somebody says "Parade rest." Insted of lyin down in the grass somewhere an takin a smoke you grab hold of your thums an stick one foot in front of the other like those old fotografs of your grandfather in the album.

The worst kind of rest tho is when you get back in a place like this. That means eight hours a day scrubbin guns an drillin an smoothin out horses. If that doesnt seem to set you on your feet you stand gard all nite.

The Bilitin oficer likes this place. Hes got my gun squad in a barn with half the roof shot off an the other half awful undecided. It isnt the part thats gone we mind so much as the part thats left. Id hate to come all this way just to interfere with a brick. Everybody wears there tin derby to bed at nite.

Payday came along this mornin. In the afternoon a couple of doboys came along that had just been paid to. Me an Angus took them on for a friendly game right off the Main street. It was rainin an the wind was blowin cats an dogs but we had most of the doboys money an they didnt seem to want to go till we had it all so nobody minded the wether much. Angus had just passed six times an about all the money we had was bet when there was a swish like a punctured tire an everything seemed to blow up all around.

There is times in this world when you dont stop to figger what nobody owes you. When I looked up agen I could see where it had lit in an old wreck across the street. The next thing I noticed was that the doboys an all the money was gone. We never did find out wether they was blown up or skipped.

Were goin to move out of here now in a day or two. The Captin says were goin to a more active sector.

Yours till you read it in the papers  
*Bill*

*Dere Mable:*

Were in a new posishun. That sounds like those vawdevel fellos that paint themselves gold an stand on one leg or a hired girl. It aint nothin like that tho. In the army a posishun is anywhere your guns happen to be. Just now ours is in a woods an a couple of feet of mud.

The horses is showin wear to. If theyd done half the work I have theyd be wearin a tin jacket labeled corn Willie long ago. Most of them is so thin you could hang your hat on there hips an there ribs would make a good letter file.

Every horse has got a gas mask tied under his chin. They think there nose bags an pretty near break there necks tryin to get at them. Ive showed my horse his mask open an everything. He doesnt seem to catch on tho. Thats the trouble with these French horses. You cant make them understand.

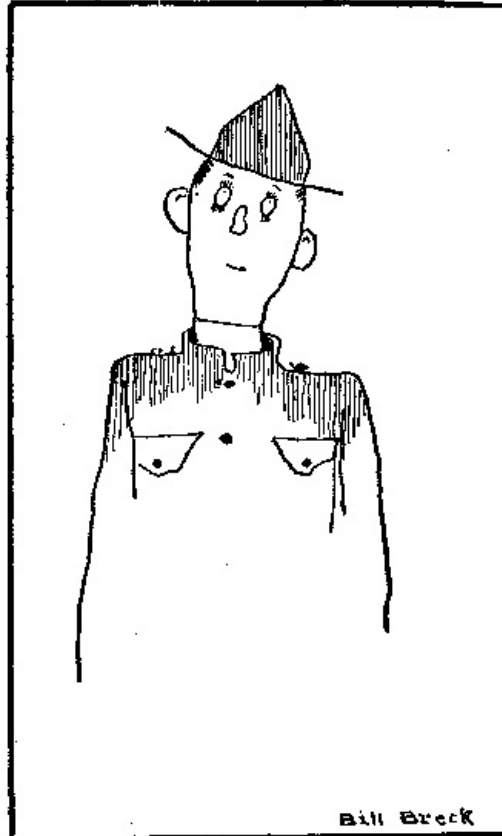
The Captin sent me back in the woods on a little undertakin job today. Lem Wattles horse had succeeded in dyin after bein at it for two weeks. It was the only thing he ever put any effort in. Just to look at him you wouldnt see what took him so long. That horse just couldnt do anything quick tho. It seems Im always buryin horses. There so darn contrary theyll drag themselves for miles just to die at my feet.



We was sittin on the corps restin a while before we started to work when we heard one of those high powered wash boilers go off back by the guns. A minit later another landed. We postponed the funeral an went back to collect the identificashun tags. One shell had lit right behind my gun an thrown mud all over it. The other had planted itself in a field just outside the woods.

Now we got to pull out of here tonite an go somewhere else like a fello tryin to sleep on a park bench.

A lot of the fellos families is givin there letters to the newspapers. Sometimes they print there picturs with them. Lem Wattles what never had his name in the paper before except when he used to get arrested, showed me a piece about two feet long with his face on top. Of course none of the things he rote about ever happened. He was back at trainin camp when he rote them. Lem will fight if you call him a liar tho.



**"LEM WATTLES WHAT NEVER HAD  
HIS NAME IN THE PAPER"**

I dont mean this as a hint to you to give my letters to the papers cause Im tryin to avoid publicity.

Im goin to turn in now a fighter cant get to much sleep. Besides I was on gard last nite an my brains seem to be dead today.

as always modist  
*Bill*

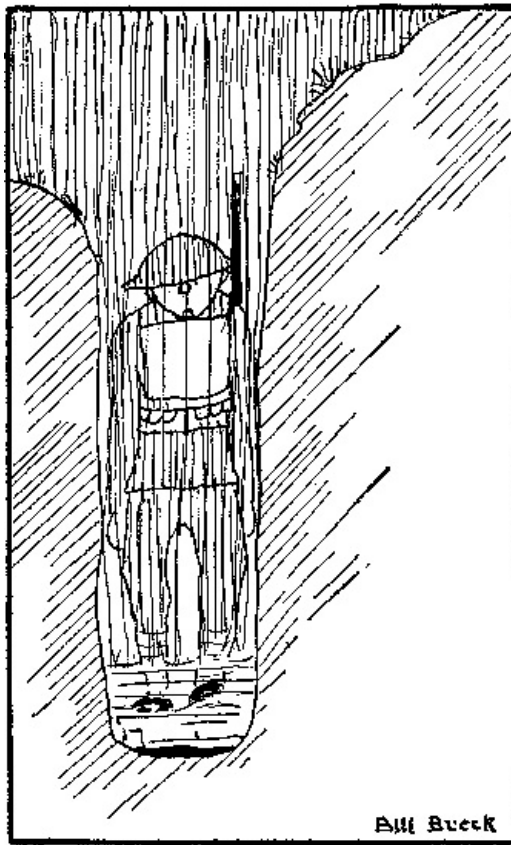
*Dere Mable:*

I got a new job. Im an artilery runner with the infantry. Dont get the idear Im on some kind of a track team cause theres one thing a runner dont do an thats run. Im not sure yet what the jobs all about myself. I dont seem to be in the artilery any more an Im not in the doboys. Mugwump. Thats me all over, Mable.

As far as I can make out the artilery send an oficer up to live with the infantry an keep the doboy majors mind off the war. He plays stud poker with him an explains that those shells were Fritzes and not ours that busted all over his prize company the other day. They dont believe each other cause nether of them thinks the other fello knows what hes talkin about so they get along pretty good.

The artilery oficer has two runners with him in case he wants a clean shirt or something from the battery. Me an Joe Mink just lie around and wait for something to happen. Nothin ever happens tho so we just lie around an wait.

Were livin right up in the trenches now, Mable. Right down in them would be more like it. This idear of comin into the war last certinly has advantages. Every time I look at all these trenches an holes I feel sorry for the poor fello what had to dig them. Whoever laid em out didnt seem to have much idear of where he wanted to go. Most of them wander around awhile an come back to where they started. All of them are as crooked as a plummers assistant. If anyone asks you where a place is around here your safe in sayin right around the corner.



**"WERE LIVIN RIGHT UP IN THE  
TRENCHES NOW"**

Everywhere you step theres a foot of mud an water. If there wasnt so many corners you could get around better in a canoo. They got sidewalks in most of the trenches they call duck boards. A duck board is a lot of little slats nailed across a couple of wooden rails. The way there laid it looks as tho somebody had walked along the top of the trench an dropped the seckshuns in. Some is upside down, some lap over each other, some is leanin agenst the sides of the trench an in the deep places some isnt there at all. Joe Mink says it keeps a fello on his toes.

Every four or five feet they leave out half a dozen slats. If you dont break your neck in one of these places they get the corners banked the wrong way so youll slide off an get drownd. If they miss you on the straitaway theyll get you on the turns.

The Lootenant sleeps with a couple of doboy officers in a sekshun of engine boiler set in the side of the trench. I sleep down in a place that looks like an old mine. About the only way you could get a shell into the thing would be to lower it down with a rope. Its the best billet Ive struck up here tho. Theres no windos for fresh air feends to be monkeyin with all the time, an of course there aint no light to shine in your face when your tryin to sleep. The only trouble is theres seven fellos sleepin there an only five bunks so we got to take turns sleepin. The floor is to muddy.

That is to say, Mable, seven fellos an two hundred rats. I never used to take much stock in those rat stories but I certinly take off my hat to them now. Thats about all you can take off unless you want to get eaten. These fellos will eat anything from the hobnails out of your shoes to a bag of Bull. They make a goat look like a dispeptik. You dont notice them while the candles are lit an your movin around. As soon as you blow out the light an lie still, tho, you can hear them comin out all over to have dinner off your equipment.

They have what they call a runners bench outside the tin house where the Lootenant sleeps. Joe an I is supposed to take turns sittin there. Its something like the bell hops bench in a hotel only this is an active front. You wont get that for a minit, Mable. All you can here when your sittin out there a fello inside saying "Hello. Pancake. Get off the wire Peggy. I want Pancake. Pancake busy? Give me Pauline. Is that you Purgatory? This is Pineapple speakin."

After Id lissened to that for about half an hour I felt like the gate gard of a bug house. I got hold of the Lootenant in a friendly way an told him Id go halves on my bunk with him cause I didnt think it was safe to sleep with that fello. He might think he was a crum some night an try to choke somebody. The Lootenant said that was just a way they had of telefonin up here. He said you never could tell when a German might be lyin up on the roof or under a bunk lissenin to you. On account of that nobody called anybody else by there right name. For instance he said they called the General Pancake an the Colonel Peggy an this place was called Pineapple.

The more I thought about it the more it sounded like a good sensible idear to me. I went in an told the Lootenant that unless he had something better I thought Id call him Prune juice from then on. He said Id guessed wrong unless I wanted to act as a stone crusher on a road gang. The trouble with most of these fellos is there to stuck up to play the game. Its all right to call a General Pancake or a Colonel Peggy but you want to watch out what you call a 2nd Lootenant.

Well Mable, if what they say is true the doboys will be goin over pretty soon. The Lootenant says were goin with em. Its about as good a chance to pick up a few first hand soovenirs as a fello could want. In case anything happens like my gettin killed or such dont bother about goin into mornin or buyin a lot of new letter paper. Just give them that pictur of me standin in front of the American flag. An when the reporters call for details remember the skies the limit.

yours until the Fritzes get me  
*Bill*

*Dere Mable:*

Its nobodies fault but the Fritzes that you aint gettin an extinguished service medal insted of this letter. A couple of mornins after I rote you last Joe woke me up an said they were puttin on a battle upstairs. From the way they were shootin things up he thought they ought to be down in the dug-out in a little while. Joes the kind of a fello that gets you up an hour before theres any need for it. I told him to call me when he heard them at the top of the stairs. Practical. Thats me all over, Mable. Then I turned over to get some sleep.

Then the Lootenant came runnin down cussin an swearin because the fone was busted. He told us wed have to go back to the battery an tell em to snap out of it an show the Fritzes that it took two to make an argument. From where we was the Fritzes seemed to be puttin up a pretty good argument all alone an most of it seemed to be goin in the direckshun of the battery. But Joe says Sailor Gare so we started off down the road. There was plenty of noise out there. It was awful foggy but you could see the red flashes once in a while when one of them lit in a field near the road.

Every time one busted Joe would duck into a ditch. He had me doin it pretty soon. The more we ducked the more we couldnt help it till we was goin down the road like a couple of Rushin dancers. Then we broke all the rules of the runners union an ran.

We didnt have no trouble findin the Captin cause we knew just where to look. Just as we started to go down in his dug-out we heard a big one comin and both landed together at the bottom. After a fellos face gets broken in to goin down stairs that way its the easiest way. The Captin was awful sore. He wanted to know what the this an that we meant by comin in without knockin. That fello would want you to salute if you had both arms shot off. I didnt say nothin. Just gave him the Lootenants message.

That seemed to make him madder still. He pushed the papers around on his desk an said didnt that one thing an another Lootenant know he couldnt get fire without orders from regimental headquarters. An didnt he know that regimental headquarters couldnt give any order till they was asked for it by doboy headquarters. An why the this an that didnt we go to the doboys if we wanted some fire.

Id like to have told him where to go to get some fire. I just saluted tho, an said "Yes sir." Spirited. Thats me all over, Mable. Then we went back to pass the buck to the Lootenant. The doboy officers was all sittin around tellin him how good the English artilery was. A couple of hours later when Joe an I was havin breakfast we heard the battery fire about twenty shots. The doboys said it was lucky we didnt fire any more cause they was probably all shorts anyway. That dont mean that they were a different size or anything, Mable. A short is a shell that hasnt got the ambishun.

I went up to an artilery observashun post with the Lootenant the other day. Only it isnt a post but a round tin house like a ticket office set in the trenches on top of a hill. Theres a slit cut in the front to look thru. The Lootenant showed me where Nobodies land was. I could see the Fritz trenches runnin in front of a piece of woods about half a mile away. They must have all been away on a furlo or something cause there wasnt as much as a fly sittin over there.

This is a great place for soovenirs. I got a lot of buttons, a piece of shell, a couple of bones I found stickin out of the trench an a Fritz hand grenade. As soon as I can find a box Im goin to send you the whole bunch. I wouldnt monkey with the hand grenade much. It doesnt look as if it had ever exploded. Give it to Archie Wainwright an tell him its a trench warmer. Maybe hell stick it in the fire.



**"IT DOESNT LOOK AS IF IT HAD  
EVER EXPLODED"**

In the afternoon when things is quiet an everybodies asleep we go out an throw hand grenades at the rats. Thats good sport cause you got to be quick or youll get your self insted of a rat. Joe Mink had to spoil it of course by blowin in dug outs. Hed have been all right if hed picked old dug outs but he wasnt satisfied till hed found one with a fello comin up the stairs. I dont see yet tho why there was such a holler raised. The old thing didnt go off. It just caught the fello in the stummick an knocked some wind out. He blacked Joes eyes an then went to the Major. Joes back in the eschelon now groomin horses. Angus MacKenzie has come up in his place so Im just as satisfied.

I guess were goin across pretty soon now. Then Ill be able to get a helmet an a looger pistol an a pair of feel glasses. I guess the Fritzes are gettin scared. I hope there not as scared as I am.

yours indefinitely  
*Bill*

*Dere Mable:*

Since I rote you last I been over the top with the doboys, taken a woods that I cant see why anybody wanted, an collected enuff soovenirs to equip a South American army. Im ritin this from a Fritz dug-out in the middle of the woods on Fritz officers paper. If Id telephoned ahed he couldnt have had things fixed up better for me. There was a lunch out on the table an blankets an even clean underclose (if youll excuse my menshuning them). They used to have electric lights here but somebody soovenired the dinamo so they wont work.

The nite before we went over four more artillery runners came up. I ast the Lootenant if they was plannin to send any doboys over to help us in the attack. He said there had to be a lot of runners sos that when two went back with a message an got killed he could send two more. Always cheery an bright, the Lootenant.

The nite before the attack we went up to a tunnel thats dug right under a hill an has got rooms in it an everything. Those fellos didnt seem to care how many shovels they wore out. We got into it down a long flight of steps in the pitch dark where I like to have broke my neck. Then down a long passage feelin your way along the road. Every four or five feet somebody would run into you an cuss you.

At last we came round a bend an there was all the doboys sittin in the mud eatin supper an smokin. The only lights they had was pieces of candle stuck up on there equipment. It looked like the whole army was in that tunnel an all smokin at the same time. The Lootenant told us to make ourselves comfortable then he disappeared into one of the rooms off to the side.

About ten o'clock all the doboys got up an went out. Then we sat in the mud and waited for three hours. Angus found some duck boards and went to sleep.

Some time after midnite a lot of officers came out of the room. We walked thru the tunnel so far that I figgered that we must be comin out somewhere behind the German lines. At last we climed a flight of stairs an there we were right out doors. Id expected thered be an awful battle goin on

by that time but everything was as quiet as church except for a few big ones that would sail over every once in a while. The stars were all out just like it was an ordinary nite. We walked along a lot of paths an fell over a lot of old barb wire, then dropped into a trench. It struck me that was the time to go across while things were quiet. But I heard the doboy Major say that there was only four more hours to wait. These fellos are worse than your family for gettin to places on time.

Everything was quiet for a long time. Then all of a sudden all the guns in the world began bangin away at the same minit. Over the top of the hill behind us an as far as you could see ether way it was just one big flash. Then the shells began racin over, squealin an whisselin an rumblin along like they was racin each other to see who was goin to get first crack at the Fritzes.

Every one of them seemed to have its own speshul whissel tied onto it. Some of them rumbled along like a fast train hittin a down grade. Some would just sing an hum to themselves sort of quiet an happy while others would go yellin an screamin across like the fire department on an exhibishun run. There was one bunch that squealed like a trolley goin round a turn on dry rails. You sort of felt as if someone ought to grease it.

Besides all these noises over our heads there was the poundin an hammerin behind us from the guns themselves. The big fellos just boom boomed away like a bunch of base drums. Up nearer tho it was like a mountin of giant fire crackers goin off together. Then thered be a let up for a second like a fello thats awful mad but runs out of words. After that theyd go at it agen harder than ever.

The best part of it was that most of them was our own shells. The Fritzes didnt seem to get into the spirit of the thing at all. Every few minutes theyd sail over a big one right near the tunnel where we came out. That was about as safe a place as he could have put em cause there wasnt anybody there.

At first the noise an everything gave a fello something to think about. After a while tho you got used to it just like you do to Niagra Falls or a steam radiator. Then there wasnt anything to do but get cold an ask about the time. A couple of doboys got tellin each other what kind of a dinner theyd order if they was some place where they wasnt. Whenever you get uncomfortable enuff a couple of fellos like that always show up. I slid down in the bottom of the trench where it was a little warmer an tried to smoke a cigaret under my hand. I must have dropped off to sleep cause the next thing I knew I was all doubled up in the bottom of the trench an half froze. I heard somebody say "Fifteen minites more." The guns was goin it harder than ever. If we hadnt won that scrap wed have had to knock off the war for a couple of months till they got some more amunishun.

Goin over wasnt much. Id read so many things about how you felt just before an just when an just after that I tried to figger just how I did feel. I was so cold I couldnt feel anything tho. I was thinkin about this when somebody says "Snap out of it ahead there. There goin." An there was the Lootenant boostin the Major out of the trench an a lot of doboys with their rifles in there hands hurryin along the top an disappearin in the fog.



**"THERE WAS THE LOOTENANT  
BOOSTIN THE MAJOR OUT OF THE  
TRENCH"**

Just as we got out of the trench the worst noise started I ever heard. It made all the shootin that went before sound like a fello drummin on the table with a couple of knives. Even the machine guns was in it this time. They sounded like a rivitin competishun in a ship yard. I heard somebody say "There goes our machine gun barrage. I hope they get it over our heads." He struck me as a pretty sensible fello.

Somebody had marked the place up with tape like a tennis court. We followed along one of these till we came to another tape runnin the same way as the trenches. There was a lot of doboys lyin down there an a lot of others comin up thru the fog, half runnin, half walkin an all of them stooped over like they was carryin something heavy.

In front it was just fog. We could see red flashes runnin thru it like bubbles in boilin water where the shells from our barrage was bustin. The fog didnt go very high cause you could make out a little blue sky once in a while. Then right thru the top of it came tearin out a regular fourth of July celebrashun of Fritz fireworks. They were just like the rockets at Weewillo Park that spit out long snakes of gold fire like a broom when they bust. The nearer that barrage came to the Fritz trenches the faster they went up all along the line.

We lay there a few minites till everybody came up. The thing that struck me now was that I wasnt scared. Id been more afraid of bein scared than anything else. Then the Major got up an started on with everybody else taggin along with him. It was to foggy to see what was happenin on each side. We went down a hill. It got swampy an we struck some duck boards. Somebody must have been over before us an put them down. If they could get around as easy as that it beat me what they were makin all this fuss for.

All around us was big shell holes filled with water. They gave the Americans a second hand battle field to begin on. The French had used it lots of times before. Once I lost sight of the Lootenant an stepped off the duck boards to pass some doboys. It was like steppin into a well. There didnt seem to be any bottom to it. I grabbed hold of a doboy that was goin by but he pushed me back agen an says "Who the this an that do you think your mawlin around here?" Then somebody gave me a hand. What I needed more than a tin derby was a pair of water wings. I didnt feel cold any more tho.

Something happened to the duckboards an we was wadin in mud to our knees. Every once in a while Id slip into a shell hole an then Id have to run to catch up agen. That Major must have been brought up in Indiana the way he got thru the mud. My rapped leggins began to shrink an the cavs of my legs hurt something awful. But we kept goin an goin without ever gettin to the Fritz trenches.

After a while we came to a little creek about ten foot wide with bushes along each side. The Major an a couple of the oficers just jumped right in an waded across. It wasnt much over there waste but it looked awful cold an black slippin along thru the fog. The doboys stood for a minit on the bank shivering like a dog when you throw a stick he wants in a pond he knows is cold.

I wish you could have heard the Major cuss. He had a line that would have driven a team of mules without reins or a whip. Naturally havin gotten all wet he couldnt see callin the battle off there. Pretty soon some doboy jumped in right where hed gone over. Then it seemed like the whole army was fightin to get across in that one place. Of course they had the whole creek to pick from but somehow nobody thought of that till everything was all over.

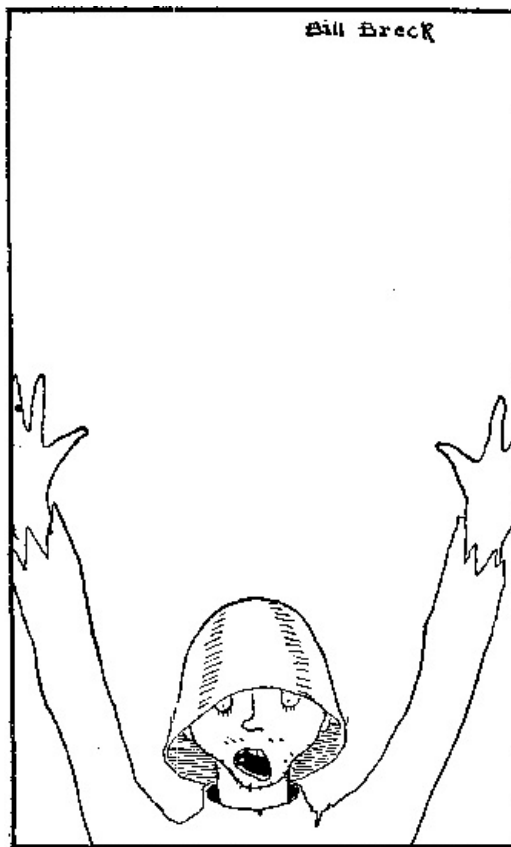
All this time I kept thinkin how we was most across Nobodies land an I wasnt scared yet. I got so cocky about it I stopped to light a cigaret just to show the doboys that a battle or so didnt make no difference to me one way or the other. But we were thru the swamp now an my legs hurt agen. We came to a road runnin right down the middle of Nobodies Land. The Major stopped here an sent out fellos to see where the rest of the outfit was. The fog was still so thick you couldnt see nothin an you couldnt hear nothin of course on acount of the racket.

All of a sudden a flock of machine guns got under way at the same time. There was a noise all around like a bunch of fellos whisselin thru there teeth. Everyone dropped down in the grass. I lay so close to the ground I bet I was a foot wider than usual. Then I knew the reason I hadnt been scared before was because nobodied been firin at us till now. Fightin is good fun, Mable, as long as the bullets are all goin the same way as you are. I dropped my cigaret when I flopped down. Now I could smell it burnin a hole thru my coat. I wouldnt have raised up enuff to pull it out tho if it had burned a hole right thru me.

As soon as the whisselin let up a little the Major jumped up an says how he didnt know where the rest of the army was but we wasnt goin to lie there an rot. I didnt feel as if I was goin to rot for quite a while but I didnt like to get left behind so I tagged along. We passed two or three of our fellos that was done in. Then a bunch of barb wire with a couple of doboys workin like hell with wire clippers. Our shells had busted it up pretty good but there was an awful lot to bust.

Just as we got thru the wire somebody says "Look out." A Fritz was runnin toward us thru the fog. His hands was floppin over his head kind of loose an he was makin the queerest noises I ever heard. The way I imagine a sheep would if youd kicked it.

His helmet was so big it looked more like a tin sunbonnet. He was just a kid an the scardest one I ever seen. We didnt have time to soovenir him. Somebody just planted him an awful kick that sent him across the barb wire an out of sight thru the fog in the direcshun of our lines.



**"HIS HELMET LOOKED LIKE A TIN  
SUNBONNET"**

Something else moved up ahead. We yelled at it but it didnt say nothin so a couple of doboys dropped down an fired. We passed him a minit later. He was layin on his back with one arm still floppin a little like a fello thats restless in his sleep.

We were right in the Fritz trenches now. They were the ones Id seen a few days before from the observashun post. Everybody seemed to have cleared out except a few that was beyond clearin. There machine guns was layin around still hot. The doboys just distributed a few bums into the dug-outs like salvashun army tracks. Then we climed out an went on.

The woods werent more than half a minit from the trenches. We ran right into them before we knew it. Everybody just busted into the bushes but I tell you Mable, it was worse than takin a cold bath in winter. I expected to fall into a machine gun nest any minit. Nobody tried to stop us tho. It looked as tho theyd all beat it. Pretty soon I came to a road all made out of boards. Id lost the Lootenant and the Major by this time but there was a lot of doboys around an it looked as tho the show was all over anyway. Just as we stepped out on the road about a dozen Fritzes came runnin down with there hands floppin over there heads an blattin like the first one had. Some doboy made a pass at one of them with a bayonet just for fun. He started to whine like a kid. No matter how scared I ever get Mable Ill never be as scared as these Fritzes an thats sayin a goodeel.

Things seemed pretty well over so I stopped to help the doboys soovenir this bunch. I just took a few buttons an a helmet offen one. He had red hair. Most of them wanted us to take everything they had. Then I started up the road to see if I could find the Lootenant an the Major an a looger pistel. There was a bunch of us all together. I dont know just how it happened but I guess there must have been a machine gun planted at a bend in the road just ahead of us. It cut loose as soon as the last prisoner had started for the rear. I could hear those old pills whisselin thru there teeth at me as they went past. A couple of the doboys dropped without lettin out a sound an I made a move that would have deceived the quickest eye. I never saw a road cleared so quick in my life. An there I lay beside the board road, Mable, lissenin to the machine gun bullets playin she loves me she loves me not with the daisies over my head.

I hated to lose that helmet havin taken it off the Fritz myself an he havin red hair an the like. So I slipped it into an openin under the road. Then I noticed everybody else crawlin away thru the bushes so I crawled after them havin nothin else to do.

After Id crawled till it seemed like I must be pretty near out of the woods an the knees of my trousers I stood up. When I looked around for the doboys there wasnt any. All I could hear was rivitin machines an shells bustin all around me. An the bullets was criss-crossin thru the bushes like a bunch of draggin flies. It seemed like a useless place for an artillery fello to be in.

Well, Mable, Im goin to quit now cause one of the doboy runners is goin back an I want to give him this letter. I am enclosin some mud I picked up in Nobodies Land. It may help to give you some idear of the country.

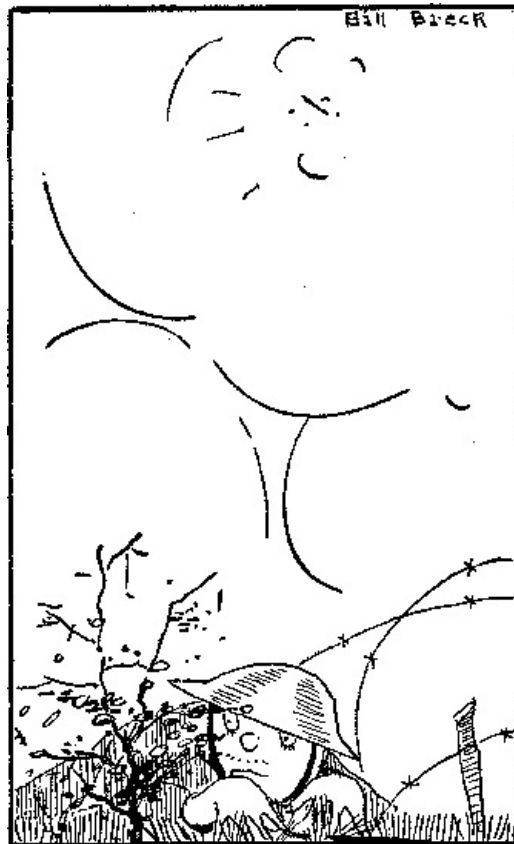
Yours to the last Fritz

*Dere Mable:*

I never thought Id be ritin such long letters that Id have to be gettin them off my chest on the instalment plan. Ive sharpened my pencil so ofen there aint hardly enuff left to hang onto. There shellin the woods today. Every time one lands anywhere near the dug out something seems to break the point.

Well, Mable, in my last letter I left myself standin all alone in the middle of the woods lissenin to a lot of things flyin round my head that arent in no bird book. I was beginnin to think wether, havin lost the Lootenant an the Major, I hadnt ought to go back to my battery. Duty before plesure. Thats me all over, Mable. Just then I heard someone comin thru the woods.

That was the worst minit of my life except once when I had to make a speech in High School. I decided if it was goin to be my last Id spend it as private as I could so I stepped behind a bush. Whoever was comin seemed to have the spring halt. Hed come a little way. Then hed stop. Then hed come a little. I couldnt figger where I had any call to act as a Fritz recepshun comittee so I started to crawl away. Just as I stuck my head around the bush I saw something that made me lie down agen so hard I bet the ground is still stamped with the eagels on my buttons. It was only the end of a shoe passin thru the brush about fifteen feet away. There are times tho when an old shoe can look worse than your granfathers gost sittin on the end of your bed makin faces at you.



**"I STUCK MY HEAD AROUND THE BUSH"**

I lay there for what seemed like a couple of days. I didnt dare roll over on my back for fear of makin a noise an I didnt dare stay on my face for fear of somebody makin a pincushun out of me while I wasnt lookin. I was tryin to think out some way of not doin ether when the queerest noise you ever heard started on the other side of the bush. It was like water comin back into a facet after its been shut off for a while. I could feel my tin derby pull right up offen my head. The noise kept gettin loud an ended up with a sneeze. You couldnt have lifted me higher with a shell. I never was gladder tho to hear a sneeze cause I knew who that belonged to. I could have told it blindfolded in a milyun.

I was so glad to find Angus I forgot he didnt know I was there an ran around the bush. He was lying in a bunch of briars all red in the face from trying to hold in. When he heard me comin he threw up both hands. Then when he saw who it was he tried to make out he was stretchin.

Angus said hed been crawlin around the woods tryin to find somebody till he saw me duck behind a bush. Hed been layin there ever since tryin to decide wether to shoot me an take a chance on missin or lay there till I died a natshural death. It was easy to see tho that we wouldnt win anything but a wooden cross hangin round there so we walked thru the woods till we ran into about twenty doboys. One of them said they was after a machine gun nest that was holdin things up. Even that was better than snoopin around alone an we followed along like a couple of dogs after a parade.

Well, Mable, the doboys is ether awful brave or awful stupid. They might have been after birds



nests the way they went at it. Nobody but me seemed to figger that we might be comin up in front of that machine gun insted of behind it. It was just beginnin to strike me that this didnt have much to do with an artillery runner when a couple of the doboys off to one side began throwin hand grenades. I heard a lot of cussin an when we got up there was five Fritzes standin in a pit with a machine gun. There hands was up in the air except for a couple that didnt count.

It was the first time Id seen them doin any real soldierin. An do you know, Mable, there wasnt a woman among em. They wasnt even chained to there guns. Theres something wrong with this war or else the styles are changin.

One of the doboys took them back. They were a pretty poor lot an didnt have anything worth while with them. The doboys seemed to have some idear where they were goin so we stuck along. They went down in a few dug outs. In one of them we found six Fritzes an four looger pistels. That made everybody feel pretty good except the fellos that was left out. They voted solid it was a rotten show. The machine guns was off more to one side now but it seemed like they was throwin a lot of shells around without much regard to where we was.

We came out on a road an ran into a doboy Captin an two or three men. Havin nothin better to do we followed him. He turned up a little railroad track like the one that used to run around the county fair for a dime. It twisted along thru the woods without seemin to come out much of anyplace. Then we came round a bend an about fifty yards away was a gang of Fritzes stokin shells into four whoppin big guns as fast as they could fire them out.

The next thing I knew I was runnin down that little track behind the Captin. Quite a ways behind, Mable. Everybody was cussin like a mule-skinner. Angus was sayin things in Skotch I bet hed hate to have rote down as his last words. But the Fritzes didnt seem to have no idear of makin them that. They stopped for one look an dove in the bushes like a bunch of rabbits. All except a few that was to scared to run. They just stood an gobbled at us.

It seemed to me wed done something worth sittin around an havin a postmortem about. But the Captin just rote the name of his company on one of the guns with a piece of chalk. Then he lit his pipe an started off down the track agen. We came out on a road after a while an there was the Major an a whole lot of doboys. The doboys was sittin on the railroad track, smokin cigarets an watchin the shells bust in the woods all around them like they was at a baseball game. A squad of Fritzes was puttin a few of our doboys on stretchers an carryin them off down the road.

Well, Mable, there aint much more to tell. The Major sent me over to a tin house where the Lootenant was. I found him dryin off by an old Fritz stove an eatin somebodies Irun Rashuns. I never could find out when the battle was offishully over. There was machine guns poppin away all the afternoon but nobody seemed to be botherin much about them. I guess they just got sick of it an quit. Anyway they were gone by night.

Now were lyin around takin it easy. We fire at the Fritzes all day an they fire back at us. They havnt interfered with my meals yet tho so let them go to it. Every dug out has been turned inside out. I guess the Fritzes dont get charged for losin equipment like we do. From the amount of stuff we found they must get pretty near undressed before they run away.

Ive just been figgerin up the total victory with Angus. We got five loogers, two pair of feel glasses (one broke), a gold watch that can be fixed, three pocket fulls of buttons, a lot of letters we cant read an four belts. As for helmets an gas masks an the like all you got to do is reach your hand out the dug out door. If we could only soovenir a Ford truck to carry all this stuff wed be fixed.

Im goin to quit now an get some sleep. Angus says lay up all you can while you have a chance. Hes laid up enuff to last him the rest of his life since Ive known him.

Yours as long as it lasts  
*Bill*

*Dere Mable:*

Ive heard so many shells floatin over this old wood in the last week that they dont mean much more to me now than the postmans whissel. Only I hope I dont ever hear one stop an turn in here cause I aint hankerin to be evakuated like a pictur puzzle.

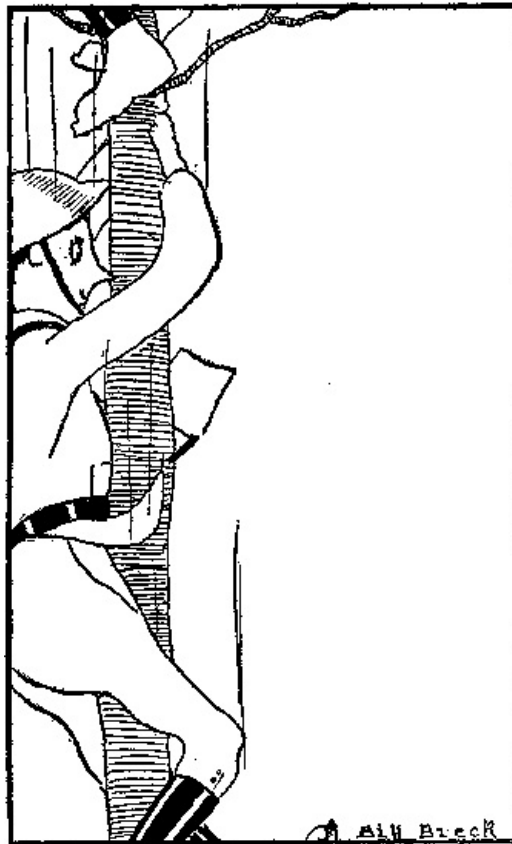
Im sleepin with the doboy runners. If you want to know anything about the war thats the place to live.

Yesterday the Lootenant called me over to his dug out an said he was goin to establish a couple of observashun posts. I thanked him an said Id seen all I wanted to so if it was the same to him Id stay in an keep my eye on the soovenirs. As soon as he saw I had something else to do hed have dragged me out if Id only had one leg to walk on.

The Lootenant loaded everything he could think of onto my back. I wouldnt have been surprised if hed ended up by climin on himself. If you could win this war with telescopes an things it would have been over three days after he got into it. We went to a place where the Dutch had built a platform way up in a tree on the edge of the woods. The Lootenant an a doboy oficer climed up. They was up there so long we thought theyd probably found an old machine gun nest an gone to sleep in it.

While we was sittin under the tree plannin how wed improve the army if it was ours we heard an airypine comin. You could tell by the noise it was flyin low. We figgered if it was a Dutch plane the Lootenants was up a tree more ways than one cause they stuck up above the rest of the woods like a sore thum. Pretty soon we could see it thru the branches an sure enuff there was the irun cross painted on the bottom. It came up to the tree an circled round it. Then it opened up its machine gun at it an flew away with a trail of yellow smoke comin out its hind end.

You ought to have seen those two Lootenants come down. They beat every law of gravity old man Newton ever passed. The Lootenant said theyd fixed that observashun post all right an now he was goin to put up another one on the other side of the woods. He thought this next one would be better on the ground.



**"YOU OUGHT TO HAVE SEEN THOSE  
TWO LOOTENANTS COME DOWN"**

The next place we stopped was a little clearin on the side of a hill. You could look right across the Moose river an see where our shells was landin in a grave yard right near a Fritz town. Some of these fellos certinly is there. The Fritzes was gettin back at us by shellin our doboys near where we was workin. Thats the way they do. When we shell the Fritz doboys they come right back at us an shell ours. Its a case of you kick my dog an Ill kick yours. Thats a nice arrangement for everybody but the doboys.

The Lootenant set up a little table an began squintin thru some glasses like he was goin to lay a railroad thru to Berlin. Then shh-bang an one of those little Hungry Awstrian guns lit in the woods behind us. Those things dont lie around in the sun decidin wether there goin to be duds or not I can tell you. I dont stand around waitin to find out ether. Im gettin so I can drop quicker than a war stock. When that thing lit we was all standin round watchin the Lootenant. When it started distributin itself around there wasnt nobody in sight. A couple of others came right after it closer still.

After a while I heard the Lootenant say "Its so comfortable in here I hate to get out." Like he was takin a hot bath or something. Only he didnt fool nobody that way. When it looked like the Hungry Awstrians had quit everybody began poppin out of the ground agen. As soon as we was all up shh-bang. Angus cut his eye on a rock in the bottom of a shell hole. Hell be able to give pointers to Annie Kellerman when he gets home. If he ever gets wounded Ill bet itll be in the sole of the foot.

After that the Lootenant decided he wouldnt keep us out any longer. He was afraid wed miss our mess. The war is changin some people.

Well Mable Ill rite you agen in a few days if I dont get put on detached service with the Angels.

until then yours exclusively  
*Bill*

*Dere Mable:*

I suppose you thought I was dead for the last two weeks. You was so near to right a couple of

times I wanted to get something definite on it before I rote you. I been havin newmonya now in the hospittle for ten days. I havnt been so sore since I had the mumps Crismus vacashun. After duckin half the shells the Croup people ever turned out I had to get hit with a cold in the head. I bet I get the chicken pox on my honeymoon.

An now here I am holdin down an irun cot that creeks when you turn over, missin all the fun an not even goin to get a wound stripe. The worst of it they tell me I got as much chance of gettin back to my battery as I havin of catchin the Croun Prince. They say like as not Ill land in some Steva Dora regiment in the SOS or in the M.P.s. They dont seem to have nothin to do in this army but take you from where you want to be an put you where you dont.

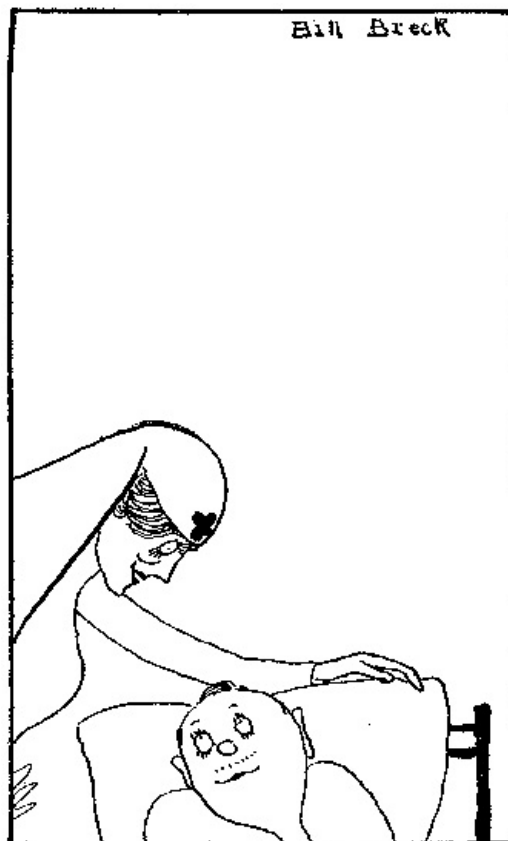
But I aint goin to complain, Mable. I told em that after Id been here four days. All I say is if they dont let me out of this hole toot sweet Im goin to get up an beat it an die on the road. Then perhaps theyll wish they had.

Theres not a blessed thing to do but wait for mess an lissen to the fello lie in the next bed. He can make Annie Nias look like Martha Washington before hes been talkin five minites. He says that when he got hit the shells was fallin around him so fast that the only way he saved his life was by deflectin them off with a bayonet. Two of them came at him at once an he got mixed up. I ast him why he didnt catch one on the back of his neck like the fello does the cannon balls in the vawdeville show. The nurse told me yesterday he got his foot run over by a truck. Everybody spends there time tellin how they used to shake dice with death every mornin before breakfast. It works out all right cause nobody believes anybody else an it gives them good practice for when they go home.

Its a funny thing about the fello in the next bed. I came in two days after he did. Four days after he got here he came down with newmonya. I got it two days later. He died last night. But of course that dont necesarily mean nothin. Cheerful an bright to the last gasp. Thats me all over, Mable. Of course I dont want you to worry cause that would make me worry an theres no tellin what that would bring on.

Well, Mable, I got a big surprise for you. I guess itll take a load offen your mind. You know all that stuff we been readin in the war stories about hospittles an the like. It all goes the same. "The next thing the fello knew he was lyin between snowy white sheets an a butiful vizun was bendin over him. She had vilet eyes an was full of tears like shed been cryin or something. An she smooths out his pillo an says 'Your better now.'" That smoothin out the pillo always seems to cure em. Well, Mable, Im sorry to say thats all bunk—every word of it.

When I first heard they were goin to send me to a hospittle behind the lines I didnt care a bit. I wanted to have a look at a vilet eyed nurse. Accordin to the books they usuly turn out to be Dutcheses or somebody. I was plannin to look up in her eyes an say "This must be heven. Do you happen to have any lemonade?" Or something mushy like that. Then shed cry some more an like as not put a stick in the lemonade.



**"DO YOU HAPPEN TO HAVE ANY LEMONADE?"**

Of course I wouldnt have married her or nothin. In the first place all the churches over here is

knocked down an besides I got other plans if I ever get a chance between wars.

The thing started off all wrong by my not bein unconshus when they brought me in. I didnt even ride in on a stretcher. I was a sittin case. They walk. Before I could get into the place at all I had to report to a sargent. He ast me so many questions I thought I must have struck some recruitin stashun an might be enlistin agen. I pretty near had heart failure for a minit. The sargent told me report to Ward 19. You never go anywhere in the army. You report. Theyd have a fello in his coffin report to his grave if they could.

When they built Ward 19 they took all the joy out of it by makin it look like a barracks. Insted of a vilet eyed nurse there was a bleary eyed Captin sittin in a little room in front. He didnt look as if hed been to bed since the war started. I says "Sir, Private Smith reports to be sick in Ward 19." Nobody cried or looked at me with tears in there eyes. The Captin just says "What the this an that is the matter with those fellos up there do they think this is the only hospittle in France? Lets see your card."

He called an orderly who showed me an empty bed where I was to be sick. Then he says "If you want anything to eat you better get your close off." Just like a fello couldnt eat right with his close on. An he says "You dont have to set your dirty shoes on the blankets nether."

After Id got into bed the nurse came along to take my temperment. I aint goin to say nothin agenst that nurse tho. She was all right an it wasnt her falt she didnt have vilet eyes. As for cryin, Mable, she was too busy to have shed a tear if you shoved a peck of onyuns under her nose. I never saw anybody work so hard. Shed make a good wife for the Top sargent. It would make him happy to sit around an watch her.

Well, Mable, if you dont get another letter from me youll probably get one from the local congressman explainin why. If the worst come to worst tell your father I didnt bear no grudge agenst him. I was thinkin yesterday about a little motto or something for my toomstone. I sort of like this one. I showed it to the nurse. She said she never saw anything like it on anybodies toomstone so I guess itll be all right.

Here lies the body of Bill Smith, dead  
For the good of the service, with a cold in his head  
Tho hed felt (without duckin) the bullets breeze  
He was called aloft by an ordinary sneeze.

yours hopefully  
*Bill*

*Dere Mable:*

All kinds of things has happened since I rote you last. In the first place I didnt die of newmonya like I said I was goin to but I bet I had the government worried about my insurance a couple of times. One day they put a bunch of us in an ambulance an drove off. Nobody knew where we was goin except that it was toward the front. It seemed good almost to hear those old guns bangin away just like Id never been gone. An then the first person I saw when they let me out was the Top sargent. Itll give you an idear how glad I was to get back to the outfit when I say I could have kised him, whissel an all.

Im riting this way down in a Dutch dug-out. Upstairs there shellin all the time. War certinly has changed since I went to the hospittle. You take more chances goin to mess up here than you did goin over the top when this all started. In half an hour, I got to go on gas gard. That means I stand in front of the dug out an when I smell something I blow a klaxon. If any old Ford ever sneaks up behind me when I get home an blows a klaxon theyll probably see me clap my derby over my face an dive into a coal hole.

Theyve thrown so much gas at us lately that its gettin on the mens nerves as well as there close. Most of the fellos would yell gas if you threw a pot of geraniums into the dugout. Somebody stepped on Anguses hand while he was asleep yesterday an he put some iodine on it. He woke up in the middle of the night an smelt it. He had us wearin our gas masks pretty near the rest of the night. But we—

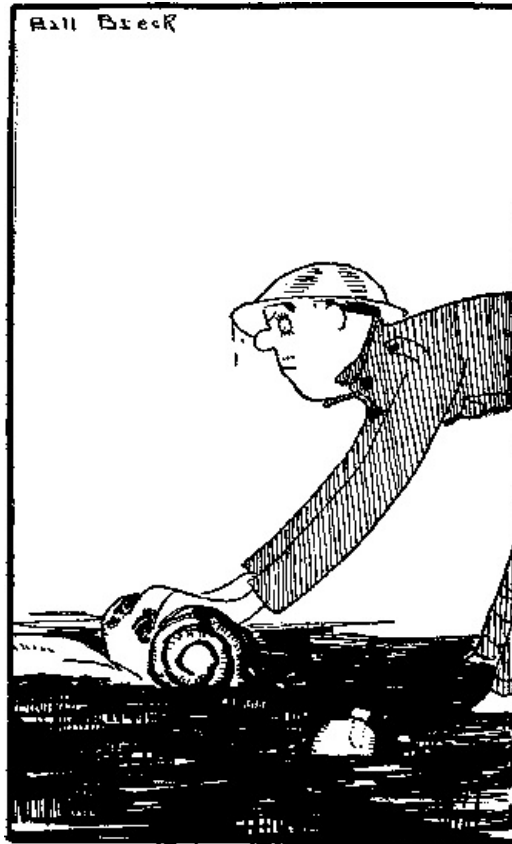
Ive forgot what I was goin to say there. I bet Ive got gray hairs since I rote that last line. Just as I got to the "we" I heard the old klaxon squawk. When I felt around my chest for my gas mask it wasnt there. It was worse than findin yourself on the street car without a nickel on the way to your own weddin. I sat there wonderin how long I could hold my breth till I almost busted a lung. Then I remembered it was on my knee under the letter where Id been usin it for a ritin desk. Theyd have sent me back to the States as gas instructor if they could have seem me put on that mask. Chained lightenin. Thats me all over, Mable.

All we do nowadays is move. Back in the States it used to take us 24 hours to get ready for a hike. Now were lucky if we get 24 minits. We expect anything an we havnt been disappointed so far. Like the other nite when we were on our way to this place. It was rainin as usual. Wed pitched pup tents in the woods an had just gotten to sleep. Angus an I was bunkin together on some hay that hed pulled of a forage wagon that was caught in a jam. We was lissenin to the rain an sayin how lucky we was not to be out in it. That is nothin but our feet an there always wet so they dont

count. Its funny how different rain sounds beatin on the sides of a pup tent an on a tin derby.

I went to sleep an dreamed I was on a train just pullin into Philopolis. I looked out the windo an saw your father on the platform with a whissel in his mouth. He was blowin it an dancin around like a mad monkey. Then I woke up an the Top was standin outside blowin on his whissel like he was tryin to blow the pea out of it an sayin "Fall in. Harness an hitch."

Well, Mable, to say that bunch was sore was like callin Niagra Falls pretty. I dont suppose you ever tried to make a blanket roll in the pitch dark an six inches of mud. It comes out like a jelly roll only mud insted of jelly.



**"TRIED TO MAKE A BLANKET ROLL  
IN SIX INCHES OF MUD"**

About midnight the Top came from somewhere an says "Unhitch an unharness. Put up your pup tents. We aint agoin to move."

I never saw so much mud. Mud seems to go with the army just like monkey meat an Top sargents an first calls.

Theres been a whole lot of talk about peace lately. Angus says theres some Dutch officers comin thru here in an automobile to see General Fosh about an armistice. An armistice is awful tecknickle, Mable. About the only way I can explain it is that you dont quit fightin only you do. I may be eatin gobbler at Thanksgivin yet.

Just now I got to quit cause theres no armistice yet an Im supposed to go on gas gard at five o'clock. Its six now. The fello thats on gard has been yellin down the stairs at me fer an hour so I guess Ill go up an see whats the trouble. Hes an awful nervus fello.

yours till I come off gas gard  
*Bill*

*Dere Mable:*

The war is over. Finney le gare. The six inch head lines lost their job at leven oclock Monday mornin. Its so quiet you can almost hear it. It sure will be a come down when we have to look at picturs in the Sunday papers of the Prince of Whales visitin a tooth pick factory an the flower show at Passadinner.

It wasnt much of an endin to a worlds champeenship scrap. Id always thought that when they ended wars like this they lined up same as in the pictur your father has of whats his name surrenderin to thingumbob at Yorktown. I thought General Fosh would come ridin out on a big white horse an General Hinderberg on a big black one. Hed hand Fosh his sord or whissel or whatever it is that Generals carry nowdays. Then everybody would cheer, the bands would bust out with the Star Spangled Banner an it would be just like after the fello rides a bicicle over five elephants in the circus. After that wed hand our guns over to some museum an go home. Somehow or other it was to big to peter out the way it did.

We fired off an on Sunday night an then quit when it got daylight. Most of the fellos were down in

the dug outs catchin a little sleep except for the gards an a few others that was monkeyin around upstairs. Me an Angus was sittin in a little trench in front of the first gun. Angus was cleanin his revolver. I might have known from that that something out of the way was goin to happen.

The Fritzes was sowin a big field in front of the battery with wash boilers. Theyd been at it all mornin but about the only thing they was killen was the grass. Not bein interested in the hay crop we wasnt callin them up to tell them about it. Every ten minites or so you could feel a big one land. Then wed stick our heads up over the top of the trench an watch it throw up mud in the air like Old Faithless guyser.

We was talkin about the armistice. Angus said if it was sined up we was to go to college in England for six months or else to Rusa to fight the Slovo Checkracks or the Checko Swaybacks or somebody. Not wantin to do ether I couldnt see where the armistice was goin to do me much good.

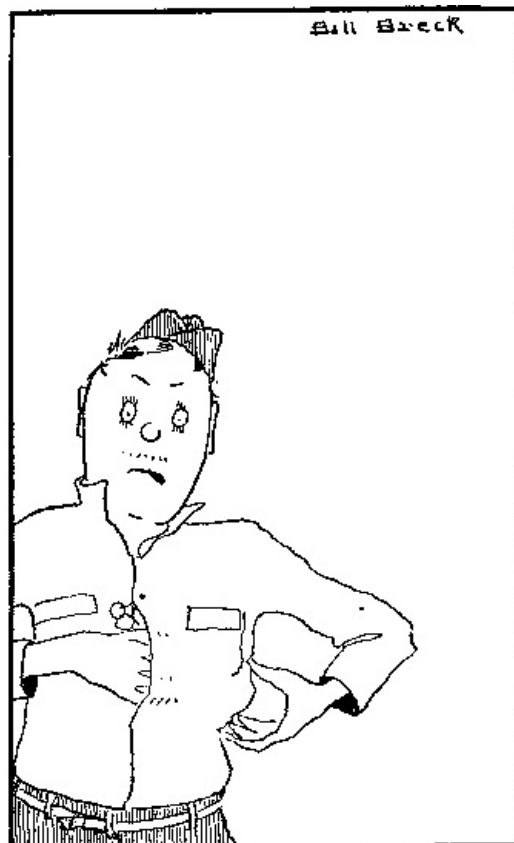
Just then I saw the Top comin but it was to late to go anywhere. He says "I want you fellos to go an help unload a rashun truck thats stuck in the mud down the road. An by the way, the wars over in about five minits so dont go around shootin anybody after that unless you want to land in the gard house." I bet if the angel Gabriul stuck his head out of a cloud an said the world was goin to end in twenty minits all that would worry the Top would be thinkin up details to keep us sweatin that long.

Thats about all there was to the end of the war as far as I was concerned. Angus says "Ill be damed." Then he squinted thru his gun an handed it over to me an says "See if you think thats rust up near the front end." We stopped everybody that came along an told them about it. Most of them would just say "Ill be damed." Then theyd stand around for a minit thinkin it over an ask "When are we goin home?" Youd think me an Angus was runnin some kind of a Cooks toor.

Things warmed up a little after it got dark. Everybody got there fireworks out an touched them off. It was the first time since we been in the war that we found out what a lot of those rockets were. It made 4th of July look like Sunday in Philadelphia.

Of course all anybody thinks about now is when there goin home. Most of the fellos is expectin to help put the fires out on the family Crismus tree. Theres a few of them thinks theyll be eatin homemade turkey Thanksgivin. I wouldnt worry much if I was a turkey tho.

Well, Mable, after all the baths I took last winter an all Ive been rained on since I got here I finally adopted a pack of cooties. I guess some Fritz left them in a dug out to starve. I dont know why it is that animals seem to take to me so. This bunch is so attached to me I havnt been able to shake them for two weeks. I used to think cooties was funny just like you think slippin on a banana peel is funny till its your slip. Now all I do is scratch, scratch, scratch. Thats me all over, Mable.



**"ALL I DO IS SCRATCH, SCRATCH,  
SCRATCH"**

Im enclosin a blank slip they gave out today. Anybody that wants to send a Crismus present has to have one. I wasnt goin to send it first cause it sounded a little like I was expectin a present. Then I figgered Id just tell you I didnt want one an send it for a curiosity.

I guess Ill see you in about a month. Its just a question of findin somebody thats fool enuff to take these guns offen our hands. You might as well start oilin the victrola. You can tell your father hes goin to sit down to the biggest dinner he ever tackedled the first Sunday after I get home, liver or no liver.

till then as always  
*Bill*

P.S. Im sendin half a dozen of those slips extra in case the first one should get lost or some of your friends wanted to send anything to somebody over here.

*Dere Mable:*

You couldnt guess where I am now. Im not to sure myself. All I know is it isnt the way home. A couple of days after the armistice was signed we pulled the guns into what was left of a town. The Fritzes had just moved out. Then the Captin told us there was an army goin into Germany an we was to be part of it. It struck me as a pretty low trick when wed told the Fritzes we was thru fightin to go right on pickin on them. He said it was an honer. Im always leary of that. In the army honer an hard work are the same thing.

We lay around four days before we started. The Lootenant said that was to give the Fritzes a good start. I cant make out if were still at war or if this is some kind of a handicap race. We traveled a week tho and didnt see one of them. I guess we gave up after that cause theyve let us lie around here four or five days. They call this the Providence of Luxemburg. Im glad we didnt have to fight our way here.

Thanksgivin is over. You probably know that tho. I suppose we got a lot to be thankful for but a fello gets a short memory when his brains full of mud. As far as I can see the turkeys had the most to crow about this year. It might have been St. Patricks day for all we saw of them. We had stake an gravey an potatoes. The mess sargent said we ought to be thankful it wasnt corn Willie. He could think up some reason why we ought to be grateful to him if he fed us nails.

The people here wear wooden shoes an have big manure piles an no shapes. Theyll scrub the inside of the house till its so clean you could eat offen the floor. Only I never could see any advantage in that cause nobody in his right mind would want to eat there. Then theyll build a manure pile right under the front windo. That aint so bad here as it would be home cause the only time they open the windos is when they want to throw something out. Then they shut em quick sos they wont let out any air. I bet the greatest hardship the German army had was sleepin outdoors for four years.



**"THE PEOPLE HERE WEAR  
WOODEN SHOES AN HAVE NO  
SHAPES"**

Angus says the Providence of Luxemburg is run by a Dutchess thats young an good lookin. I guess she must be a foriner. Shes never been married which shows shes got pretty good taste from all Ive seen around here. There sure will be great opportunities over here for a young fello after the war.

Well, Mable, I dont think well be over here long. Angus says this is just a kind of a parade to show the Fritzes how good we are. Im glad to hear your goin to a motor school. It certinly will be good when you have a puncture not to have a bunch of wimmin hangin out of the tonno askin you if you want some candy an should they get out.

as ever sick of the army  
*Bill*

*Dere Mable:*

We crossed into the Fodderland yesterday. After scrappin about it for four years nobody seemed to give a rap any more than if wed been draggin in a load of hay. You remember how the papers used to say if we ever drove the Fritzes back to Germany we could never get across the border. Proper Gander, every word of it. They didnt even have a fence around it.

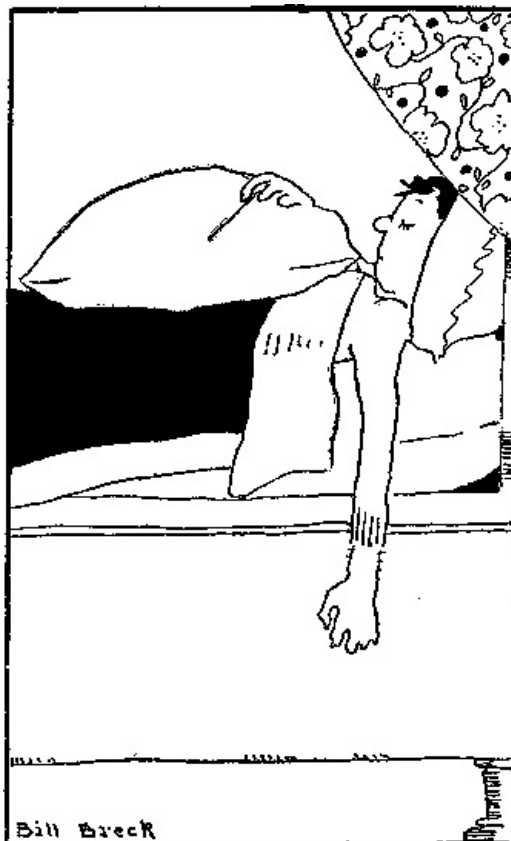
We just crossed a little river no wider than Silver Creek an there we was. No screamin wimmin, no stray shots out of attiks, no awtrocities. Nobody even took the trouble to come out an hiss at us. It made everybody feel pretty low I can tell you. The only ones that took any interest at all was a bunch of kids in soldiers caps an stand up collars like your father wears. They seemed to think we was goin to show in their town an trotted along beside us to watch the big tent go up.

Wed all been plannin for some time on committin a few good awtrocities as soon as we got into Germany just to liven things up a bit.

As usual tho when the Captins runnin the party anything sporty is ruled out. The only awtrocities hell let us commit is makin faces at the Fritzes. The whole thing has been an awful disappointment. This country aint no diferent from France or the one we just left. It aint even colored diferent like it is on the map.

Theres a fello from Milwawke in our battery named Joe Bush. It certinly helps to have somebody around that speaks German. Last night Joe told me hed found a regular bed in one of the Fritz houses that the officers seemed to have missed. He traded me half of it for a package of cigarets. Back to the hay barn for me tonite.

A German bed is like a loaf of bread thats rose to much. Its so high you need a chair to get onto it. I guess youd need a coroner if you ever rolled off it. When I first got up on it I couldnt make out where the bed close was. Then I found there was two mattresses, one about four feet thick an the other on top about a foot thick. Your supposed to sleep between them like a sanwidge. The little mattress is built so it just reaches from your neck to your ankles if you aint to tall. You can get the idear by lycin down an puttin a sofa pillo over you. Ether the Fritzes has awful tuff feet or there built like a pocket drinkin cup. I tried rollin up like a dog till Joe caught onto it to.



**"A GERMAN BED IS LIKE A LOAF OF BREAD THATS ROSE TO MUCH"**

Well, Mable, in about an hour I felt like I was in the hot room of a Turks bath. I dont see how the Germans is so fat if they sleep between these things.



The young girl in a kimono on the cover of the Murad boxes gives you an idea how you sleep on a German bed. I never knew why she looked so discouraged before.

The old fellow that owned the bed seemed kind of scared at first. I guess he thought after we found what it was like we might commit a few atrocities just to put us to sleep.

We agreed to call off the atrocities if he'd leave his Frow cook us up a mess of waffles toot sweet. Frow is what they call their wives, Mable. I guess it's short for Frowsie.

I got to start in forgettin my French now and begin on Dutch. I bet I talk pigen English when I get home. I don't have much trouble with languages tho. I can say quite a few things already like "Ya" and "Nine" and "Vas iss." That's all right if your just out for a social time but it ain't any good in commershul life.

It's no use tellin you to rite I never get your letters.

yours disgustedly  
*Bill*

*Dere Mable:*

We crossed the Rhine day before yesterday. It was Friday the 13th but the bridge held up in spite of it. The Rhine didn't look like much to me. I'm not much of a judge of rivers tho. It's been rainin for three days and it would take an awful lot of water in one place to make much impreshun on me.

We all thought we was goin to a town by the name of Coblenz. The Mess sargent had told us everybody was to have a room to himself and that most of the time when we wasn't at the movies we'd be canoeing up and down the river. The armies got an idea tho that if you let a soldier get near anything that's worth while he'll take it to pieces and cart it away. So they saved Coblenz by goin around it.

That night we stuck the horses and guns in the front yard of a Chatto. It looked more like Central Park to me. The fellow that owned the place was standin at the gate when we came in. He had on a green felt hat with the edges curled up like a derby and a feather stuck in it. I wouldn't have been surprised if he'd started to yodel. I bet he was as glad to see us as the meesels. A regiment of field artillery walkin around your front yard ain't no grass cultivator.

This isn't a bad place to lay over for a day tho. The town is built round a big cliff. On top is the ruins of an old castle. Some of the town tried to climb up the side of the cliff and got stuck half way. In the house where I'm billeted the front door is where it ought to be and the back door opens onto the street from the third floor. I can hear your mother sayin, "Run up in the attic, Mable, and see who that is knockin at the back door."

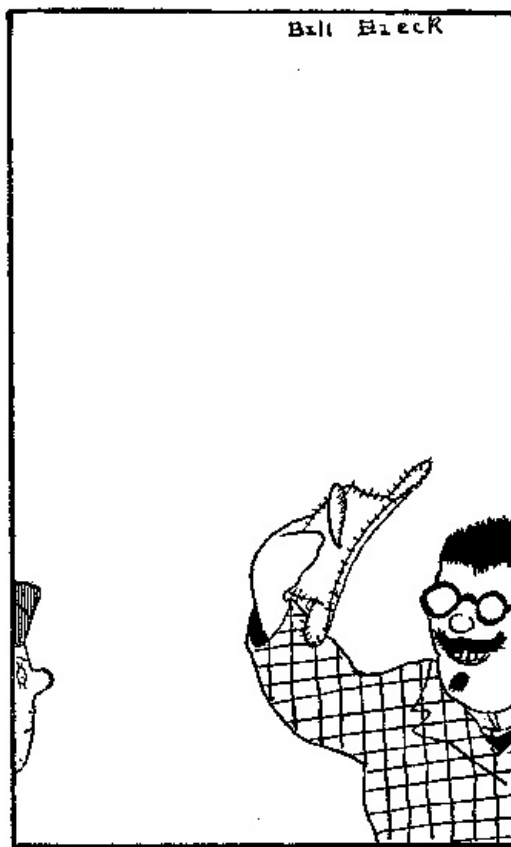
There's a little stream runnin thru the town. It's very beautiful and full of tin cans. The sides are all bricked up. The Fritzes would make the trees grow square if they could. The hills go straight up all around us. I don't know how the stream ever got in here or how we're goin to get out. It certainly is a useful place for artillery. About the only thing you could shoot out of here would be a skyrocket.

They told us we was goin to have yesterday to ourselves. Then the last minute they made us all take a bath. In the army they don't give you credit for knowin how or when to take a bath. They have a corporal there to show you. The one they had on the job yesterday must have learned from a correspondence school.

You don't get into a bath here. You take it out of something and spread it over you. This time they'd heated a big kettle of water in a wood shed. You dipped out a pailful and put some of it over you and the rest over your close. Just about the time you've got a good lather worked up the corporal says "Come on. Hurry up and get your close on. Your eight minutes is up." Ford ought to get hold of that fellow. He'd have them poppin out of the factory like corn out of a roaster.

I didn't get a bath, but I didn't need one. Me and Angus both took one the day after the armistice was signed. There ain't nothin that'll keep a man fit like keepin clean as the poets say.

Everyone's sore at these Dutchmen. They haven't got as much spirit as a bottle of near beer. All they do is take off their hats to us like we was a bunch of ladies and say "Tag." I thought first they was sayin "Dog." I went to the Captain and ast him if I could clean up with the next fellow that said it.



**"THEY TAKE OFF THERE HATS TO  
US"**

The Captin said Tag was just Fritz for Howdy. Then I ast him if I could clean up half a dozen of them anyway just to get them started on the right lines. He says "Smith, if you try any of your back alley sanitashun around here youll be cleanin up around the gard house as quick as we get one." He thinks hes awful funny. Thats the way it goes, tho, Mable. One day your a quitter if you dont throw everything but the kitchin stove at a fello and the next day they want you to kiss him.

Im sendin you a lot of post cards I paid eighty two fennigs for. I dont know wether that was a bargin or a fortune. I never seen any places like these but they give you a good idear of the country. I got to quit now cause there linin up for mess. If I ever get out of this army I wont stand in line agen if they was handin out five dollar bills. If you want to go to the movies with me you got to go early an avoid the rush.

Tell Archie Wainwright I wish him a merry Crismus cause its liable to be his last. His only chance for a happy New Year is if the war breaks out agen.

Until it does yours  
*Bill*

*Dere Mable:*

Weve quit hikin at last. Not because we get anyplace tho. Why they stopped here when there is a road goin right thru is more than I can figger. Theres about fifty houses in this place. I guess most of them was built as soon as the flood was dried out enuff sos they could lay the foundashuns. I havnt seen a new house since I been in Germany. A place that wed be puttin bronze tablets on they think has just been built.

They seem to be short on everything over here. From what I seen they live mostly on potadoes. The only thing they get enuff of is mud. Our guns is parked in a field an if we stay here much longer well have to blast to get them out.

The Captin says the rules on letter ritin is off an we can say where we are. The only thing we cant do is criticize the army. I dont know where we are an I couldnt spell it anyhow so theres not much to rite about.

We sleep in rooms now insted of barns. The Dutch dont seem to care much. I can hear your mother if four tramps came walkin into her front parlor an went to sleep on the floor. The old fello that owns the room thinks were crazy because we have to open our windos every night. He told Joe Bush there wasnt any use makin a fire for us cause when he spent the whole evenin gettin the room full of heat wed open the windo an let it all out. When we first got into that room I guess it had the original heat his granfather put in it.

Crismus is only a few days away. I suppose theyll let us sleep half an hour extra for a Crismus present an then forget to tell the buglers like they did last year. About all it amounted to was standin around in the rain half an hour longer for mess.

I havnt had my feet under a table now in four months. Theyve gotten so big since I been wearin these army shoes that I dont know if theyll go under any more. When I get home Ill probably pile my whole dinner in a soup plate an take it out in the back yard.

All feelin aside, Mable, it certinly will be good to get my food seperated agen. These fellos would pour your coffee over your dinner if there was any room. When you come up to the kitchin the first K.P. sticks a piece of meat in the bottom of your mess kit. Thats a sort of a foundashun. Then a spoonful of loose potadoes hit it like a soft nose bullet an thats the last you see of your meat. The next fello covers that with a quart of gravy an sticks a pickle in the top with his thum like inlaid work. The last one levels it off with a piece of bread slammed on like a cover. Angus says its a wise man that knows his own dinner unless hes got a good memory.



**"LEVELS IT OFF WITH A PIECE OF BREAD"**

Ive learned to put down an awful lot of food, tho, in less time than it takes to chew it. You got to be fast if you want any seconds. Some of these fellos must store up there food like squirrels cause there finished an back in the line before its moved ten places. Theres always some smart alex that washes up his mess kit an pretends hes just come up from the picket line. We got a mess sargent tho that makes Shylock Homes look like a night watchman. He could tell yesterdays greece from todays if you scoured your mess kit with sandpaper.

The Fritzes are more balled up on there money than the French. These fellos dont even know what the stuffs worth themselves. They have two kinds of money, fennigs an marks. I dont know wether marks make fennigs or fennigs make marks. I know they both make me tired. Its about as easy to buy anything here as it is to check up a Chinese lawndry bill. They tell you the price of a thing in fennigs an marks. Then you got to figger that into franks an figger what its all worth in United States. Just to give your mind a little exercise fennigs an marks aint the same more than five minites. Everybody has there own idear of what there worth an the fello thats doin the sellin never has the same idear that you have.

The first time I bought a glass of beer in Germany it took me so long to pay for it I almost got arrested for bein out after taps. We never did decide the thing. The reason none of these fellos over here never get spiffed is because they make you pay after every drink. Youd be more likely to die of thirst.

I havnt received no Crismus box yet. Im glad you an your mother did as I told you an didnt pay any atenshun to those slips I sent you for curiosities. If thered been any chance of sendin you anything Id have done it. You dont want to feel bad about that tho, cause this idear of looking at Crismus like a horse swap is all wrong. I certinly hope you have a merry Crismus. Youll probably get this letter sometime in August.

Yours optimistically  
*Bill*

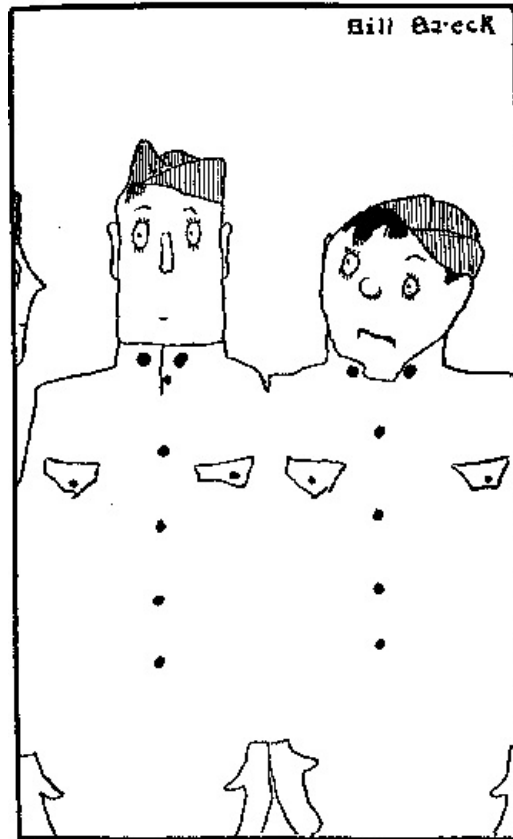
*Dere Mable:*

Another Crismus an New Years has gone by. I wonder where theyll pick out for me to spend my

next one. I wish I could get hold of a geografy an see what places are left. One of these days I may be able to get a furlo for Crismus if we happen to be fightin some country right near home. Then I can tell you how all the different nashuns spend there holidays.

I knew thered be some string on sleepin late Crismus mornin. The day before there was a couple of fellos late to revelry. They were fellos whod never done any work anyway so I couldnt see how it mattered much. The Captin said hed been plannin on lettin us sleep till seven o'clock Crismus but if we couldnt learn to make revelry wed have to keep on practisin gettin up at six. It seems to me if a fello dont know how to do that now he never will. If I get up at six the first Crismus I spend home itll be six in the evening you can bet.

Crismus mornin they lined us all up an gave each fello a little box marked "Greetins from the Folks at Home." Only they didnt say whose folks. Inside there was some tobacco an cigarets an chockolate an the like. Angus thinks theres something foney about it somewhere. He says like as not theyll take it out of our next pay roll or our A Lot Meants. Angus would think you had some axe to grind if you pulled him out of a burnin buildin.



**"THEY LINED US ALL UP"**

We didnt have nothin to do Crismus but take care of the horses an "the usual policin." That left me with almost an hour in the middle of the day without anything to do. I was goin to rite you a letter but I felt kind of drowsy. Ever since I been in the army Ive said that my first duty was to keep fit so I went to sleep insted. Patriotic. Thats me all over, Mable.

The reasen I got a chance to rite this letter is because some horse stepped on my foot the other day an I cant walk. It wasnt any accident. That horse an me never got along. Hes been layin for me ever since I brushed his teeth with a curry brush. The more I see of horses the more I want to meet the fello that wrote Black Buty. He must have learned about horses in a carpenter shop. Im goin to rite a book about them when I get home that will put the S.P.C.A. out of business. I got to stop ritin now an answer sick call with my foot. Yesterday they gave me some pills. I suppose today theyll look at my tongue an tell me its my stummick thats out of order.

Well, Mable, I havnt had so much as a pictur post card from you in two weeks. I hope that fello Archie Wainwright aint botherin you agen cause our hospittles is crowded enuff now. Im still a gentleman but if I ever catch him moldin your hammick around his figger—well, Mable, Id talk it over with him cause I seen enuff blood shed already.

yours doubtfully till I hear  
*Bill*

*Dere Mable:*

I got the first real news for you Ive had since I joined the army. Were comin home toot sweet. Theres an outfit on its way up here now to relieve us. It certinly will relieve me. Just a couple of weeks longer an then no more square heads, no more flannel bandages around my legs, no more engins without cowcatchers. It wont seem right at first. I expect Ill feel like I was A.W.O.L. an run around the corner every time I see a policeman. Theres one man they neednt be afraid of ever startin any more wars an his names Smith. If I ever have a son an he so much as starts off with

his left foot hes goin to have the worst lickin you ever heard of.

A General inspected us today. I cant help feelin sorry for his wife. She must spend most of her time lookin for a new hired girl. If he ever said anything nice to anybody I bet hed come back an apologize. Hes the kind of a fello that eats his own young.

Everybody knew the General wasnt comin over to hang no wreaths around nobodies neck. So we all slicked up pretty well to humor him.

Everything would have gone off as well as you could have expected if it hadnt been for that horse. A jokes all right in its place but its place aint under a General. The horse was so big that the General like to have bust gettin up. As soon as he got set the horse took a couple of steps. Then he sat down in the mud like a dog an let out a groan.

Of course it was all off then. By the time hed coaxed that horse up to the battery he was so sore hed have found rust on the perly gates an put Saint Peter under arrest for not bein shaved.

When he got around to my seckshun I thought he was about due to be out of breath. I had a little rip in my pants that I hadnt had time to sew up. Nothing anybodies notice. Just my knee stickin thru. That fello could see a hole in your undershirt tho. When he came up to me he looked me over like I was a windo dummy that he didnt care much about. Then he says to the Captin "What do you mean by lettin a man stand inspeckshun like that?"

The Captin looked at me surprised like hed never seen me before. Then he turns to the sargent an says "Sargent, I want a report on why was that man permitted to stand inspeckshun in that condishun." They all talk as if they were doin me a favor by lettin me stand inspeckshun. Ill tell the world I didnt go around an ask nobodies permishun.

The sargent looked at my pants kind of hurt like I hadnt ast for a new pair thirty seven times. After the General had put the whole battery under arrest an rode away to get some raw meat he sighed like a fello that everybodies agenst. Then he turns to the corperal an says "What the this an that do you mean by gettin me in Dutch, you big space filler?"

So the corperal stuck me on detail manacurin the streets for a couple of days. About all there is left for me is to go around an kick a few horses in the stummick after dark.

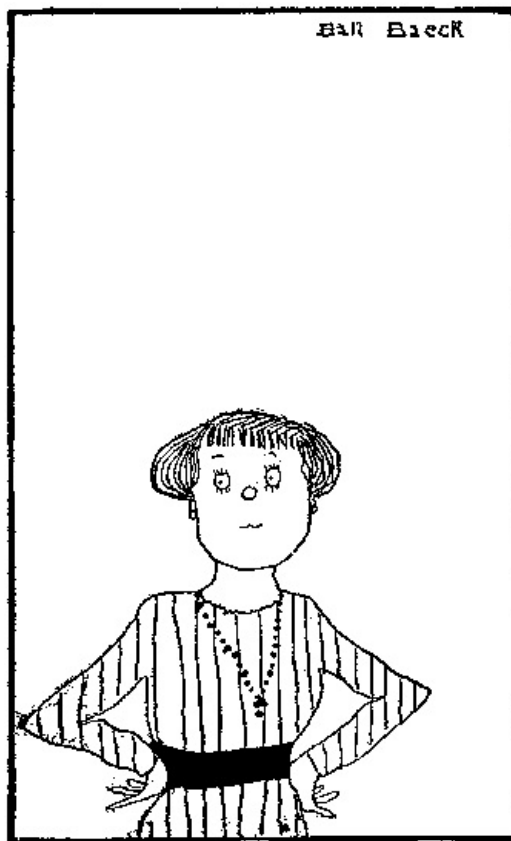
The funny part about it is that everybody knew there hadnt been no pants ishued since we got here. Half the fellos in the battery is comin thru in places the General couldnt see because he was mounted. That dont make no difference. A fellos knees aint got no rights in this mans army. I wish I was a Lady from Hell an I wouldnt have to bother about pants. Thats tecknickle, Mable. I dont guess youll get it.

They call this passin the buck. In the army they got it fixed up so that nothin aint ever nobodies fault. Its always on the next fello down. That works out pretty good unless you happen to be on the bottom step like me. I dont know why they call it passin the buck. I never saw it pass him yet.

Your Crismus box came yesterday. It sure was good of you to send it after all I said. At least a good part of it came considerin one end of the box was gone. There was enuff left to give me an idear of what had been in it. The only reason that any of it got here was because theyd set so many things on top of it that some of the stuff got kind of baled an stuck to the insides.

The thing that struck us most was the size of the box. Whoever got that up must have thought that the folks at home was goin to send us jewelrey for Crismus. I didnt care cause I knew it wasnt your falt. Joe took it kind of hard tho cause he forgot to send any slips home an he was kind of countin on me.

I got six letters from you all at once a couple of days ago. You must carry them around in your pocket a week or two like I do when anybody gives me a bunch to mail. I didnt care about anything tho when I read that Archie Wainwright had gone an married that little snub nosed thing across the street. I guess he must have been tipped off that nobodied given him the freedom of the city. Some reason or other tho I feel madder at him than I did before. I guess theres got to be a casulty when I get home anyway.



**"THAT LITTLE SNUB NOSED THING  
ACROSS THE STREET"**

I aint goin to rite any more cause the sargent ast me to help him out this afternoon cleanin the guns. I dont like to leave him to do it all alone when were so near the finish. Tell the good news to your father an mother.

Yours on the home stretch  
*Bill*

*Dere Mable:*

Here I am ritin you at the govermint's expense for the last time. Were in the same place where we first rested almost a year ago. It hasnt changed much except theyve gotten in more mud an tents since then an there aint so many boats to unpack.

Weve turned in our Soizant Canses to some monument factory. Weve said good by to our horses for ever. The last thing one of them did was to try an kick me as I went past. Thats there idea of gratitude. Now we got less to do than the doboys cause we havnt even got rifles to clean. This is the last letter youll ever get from me in France. If I have my say about it its the last letter youll ever get from me anywhere. I never want to get out of telephone range agen. Our boat is all ready. This will probably travel over on the same boat with me. I wanted to rite you from the A.E.F. for the last time. An by the way, Mable, that dont mean Am Expectin Flowers but Am Extremely Fortunate.

There aint much to say just like there aint much to do. I feel awful funny. I cant exactly explain it. Of course I want to go home. Thats all Ive wanted to do since November. At the same time I feel kind of sad like you do when your comin back to work from your summer vacashun. We been in the old army so long, an weve done the same things an cussed at them so many times, that you get sort of fond of the whole business just like you do any job that takes an awful long time an a lot of hard work to finish, but that youve finished. I guess you could get sentimental about piece work in a factory—after youd quit.

I never thought when I sat here in the mud last May an rote you how Id escaped from the pearls of the sea, as the poets say, that Id ever sit here agen an rite you that I was comin home. I never menshuned this of course for fear it would worry you. Now that its all over tho its all right to talk about it. It wasnt that I was scared cause I guess you know that I was never scared of nothin. Nerveless. Thats me all over, Mable. But I used to think of how hard youd take it when you saw it in the papers, an how people would come an look at your house an shake there heads an walk away. Some of them would pull out a lace hankercheff out of there neck or sleeve or wherever you carry those things. Theyd touch up there eyes a bit an say "I knew him well," wether they did or not.

You know, Mable, that once or twice when I get lyin awake at night thinkin about all that stuff I came pretty near cryin myself it struck me as so sad. The one I liked to think of best tho was the minister sayin a few butiful words about me Sunday. All the people was turnin around to look at you. You were cryin quiet like an your mother was tryin to keep the tears from spottin the red

Moroko himnal.

An here I am safe an sound without even a wound stripe. I feel the same way that I did when I came across on the boat without getting sunk. It aint fair to you somehow or other. I kind of cheated somehow, tho for the life of me I cant figer how. It makes me into a sort of a third class crook but Im glad to be one.

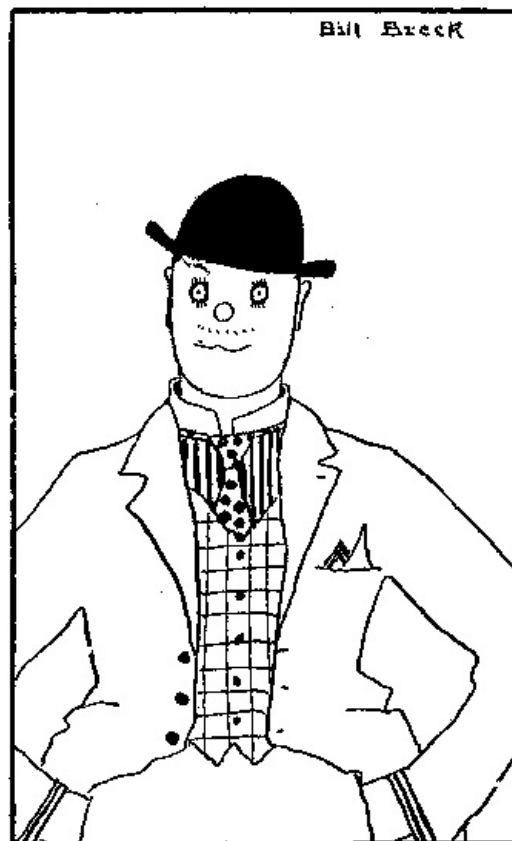
Theres been an awful lot of talk in the papers an magazines about how were comin home changed men. I dont believe your goin to have any trouble recognizin me, Mable. Perhaps Ive gotten a little stouter. Thats about all. Even the Captin, whose been with me ever since we started, was sayin to me the other day "Smith, I cant see any difference in you since the first day you came into the army."

I got thinkin the other night what a lot of good yarns I had to spin when I got home. I was plannin on how people would probably ask me around to dinner sos I could amuse em with stories about the war. I happened to menshun it to Angus an he says yes an there was about two milyun others plannin the same thing. He says the stuff about the folks that stay at home sufferin the most was never truer than it is just now.

So Ive just sworn off talkin war when I get home. I aint never goin to get like that fello down in Henrys barber shop that just sits around all day tryin to get somebody to lissen to the Battle of Gethisburg.

I may have speshul occashuns when I let loose. Like once in a while when were sittin alone evenins in the little house with the green blinds that aint built yet. Then Ill get out the helmet that belonged to the red headed Fritz an the looger pistol an the irun crosses. Ill tell you how the big ones sounded when they went over the dug-out. Ill show you how Fritz says Kamarad. Ill tell you about biletts an mud an Top sargents an whiz bangs. Perhaps once a year, say Crismus or something, Ill tell about goin over the top. I got to get that out of my sistem once in a while.

The rest of the time Im goin to be just plain Mr. Bill Smith, docter or brick layer or lawyer or street car conductor—anything in fact that hasnt got any horses connected with it.



**"IM GOING TO BE JUST PLAIN MR.  
BILL SMITH"**

So good by for a while. The next time you here from me itll be the scrapin of my hobnails on the front stoop. Then look out. Impulsive. Thats me all over, Mable.

*Bill*

THE END

\*\*\* END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK "SAME OLD BILL, EH MABLE!" \*\*\*

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