

How the Actress-Nurses Cheer Up the Trenches.



French Soldiers in an improvised Theatre in the Trenches listening to a Song of the War by the Poet Maurice Richepin, who is accompanied by a Famous French Violinist on an improvised Fiddle.

Charming Actresses, Dancers and Singers Among the Many Luxuries that Lighten the Nerve-Wracking Terrors of the Trenches

By **LIEUTENANT ERIC B. JOHNSON** of the Royal West Kent Regiment.

Field Headquarters of the British Army, near Ypres, June 6. LIFE in the trenches is a startling succession of nerve-wracking terrors and pleasant surprises.

Never did the mind of a soldier conceive that so much death and misery could be crowded into a hundred feet of trench as in this war, but never did he think that so much would be done for his comfort and entertainment.

After a day spent in facing asphyxiating bombs and 42-centimetre shells that blow a section of the globe away each time they strike, we may, if alive, pass the afternoon or evening at as good an entertainment as one could find at the Alhambra Theatre in London or the Folies Bergere in Paris.

To put the finishing touch on the luxurious side of our existence, some of the most beautiful actresses, dancers and singers in Europe have come to the front as war nurses.

Six or seven million soldiers—the censor would not allow me to be accurate—are jammed together, including both sides, on the western battle front upon a line about four hundred miles long. They are within easy distance, often within sight, of the greatest centres of population, the greatest centres of the luxury-producing industries and the most noted regions for producing choice foods in Europe.

A German army is based in Straasburg, where the best patés de foie gras come from, while not far away the French are holding back the Germans from Champagne, where the drink that is needed to wash down the other delicacy is produced. Then another part of the line is only sixty miles from Paris, which is still the headquarters of the art of entertainment, in spite of a temporary depression.

Even we Englishmen are remarkably near home. Officers in our regiment have left a battlefield piled with dead on Friday evening, gone home to comparatively quiet England, ordered some new clothes, enjoyed a dinner at home and an evening at the theatre and been back on the firing line again on Monday morning.

The old hardships, the long marches, without sufficient food or water, such as soldiers experienced in the American Civil War, the Russian-Japanese war, the Boer war and other conflicts have been largely eliminated. There is an abundance of food, drink and clothing, and even of many luxuries, which Tommy Atkins does not ordinarily get. There is no chance for long and exhausting marches.

On the other hand, there is the crowding together of soldiers such as the world has never seen before, the stench arising from unburied dead bodies and other causes, the

absence of the healthy freedom that campaigning in a rough country gives and the increase of the means of destruction a hundred times and more beyond any previous standard. We soldiers are thus being stimulated with rich food and lively entertainment to face an accumulation of terrors.

As a rule, the trenches are constructed in three lines, according to well understood rules. They are connected with one another by covered ways. The first and second lines are expected to repel attacks by the enemy. In the third are resting places for the soldiers, big "dugouts" where the higher commanders have their headquarters and where storehouses for provisions, strongholds for ammunition and so forth are concealed.

In these rear trenches you would find an entertainment going on about every half mile along a line of three hundred and fifty miles on every day of the year.

Morning and afternoon performances are more popular than evening ones, for lights cannot be used at an evening entertainment, as they would draw the fire of the enemy. The German artillerists are unhappy at night on account of the lack of targets, and everything that furnishes one is hailed by them with joy and a rain of shells.

The actresses and the show girls—God bless them!—have never hesitated to come to the front to entertain us whenever they were able to do so. Dangers of death and mutilation have never had the slightest force in deterring these brave girls from coming to cheer us up.

They have eagerly seized the opportunity to come to the front as war nurses whenever it was possible. They make the best of nurses, for they are generally strong, self-reliant, accustomed to travelling and to facing all kinds of emergencies. Having mastered the art of facing an audience they are able to face any other kind of difficulty.

When not too busy caring for the wounded these busy actress-nurses turn round and amuse us who are still alive and kicking. They have been of enormous service in helping to keep up the "moral" of the soldiers, which is the correct French expression for helping them to face the horrors and miseries of war, although most English people prefer to write that word "moral."

The army authorities sometime ago recognized the value of theatrical entertainments to keep up the spirits of the troops. At Christmas time a large company, including Ellaline Terriss and Seymour Hicks, came out under official auspices and did some good work. Their visit was only a drop in the bucket, when considered in connection with the task of entertaining upward of three million men. Since then every effort has been made to have all the actresses

Miss Phyllis Monkman in Her Curious Dance as a Vestal Virgin of the Ancient Incas, Which Has Soothed the Weary British Soldier.

and entertainers possible come to the front.

Above all, the thanks of the allied soldiers must be given to the wonderful Russian dancers, men and women, for all they have done to entertain them. English, French and Russian soldiers have been equally entertained by these devoted artists. The language of the dance speaks to every eye, without regard to nationality.

I have found that there is something in a shapely, dainty limb that speaks to a soldier more eloquently than any words from a general officer can do, that raises up his spirits and makes him ready to rush into battle with the spirit of a lion.

One of these artists who has shown the utmost bravery in exposing herself to danger for the benefit of the soldiers is Mme. Vera Fokina, the celebrated Russian dancer. She is a leading organizer of the Russian Red Cross and a working war nurse. When not busy nursing she takes off her simple nurse's garb and dons one of the wonderful costumes that she always carries in her trunk, even within sound of the roar of the guns.

A dance by Mme. Vera Fokina inspires a soldier to deeds of heroic frenzy. Her grace and strength are so magical, so superhuman, that after seeing them he feels he can dance on the enemy's barb-wire entanglements and dodge nimbly between the bullets.

How odd it is to find that Mlle. Gaby Deslys, most dainty and frivolous of Parisians, is giving all her spare time to the care and entertainment of the soldiers. She has devoted her services lately to the British, because she feels that they need amusing more than the French, that they should receive even more attention than her own countrymen for having unselfishly come to the aid of France, and especially for saving her dear Paris from the Germans.

The dainty Gaby may be seen driving the wreck of a once sturdy British soldier in her motor-cycle with its invalid chair attachment. She is giving him a ride in a healthful, dry country after his months spent in the swampy Belgium trenches that ended suddenly with a shell blast. She is chatting to him in her quaint, slightly broken English, and her cheerful society will do much to put him on his feet again and stiffen his courage.

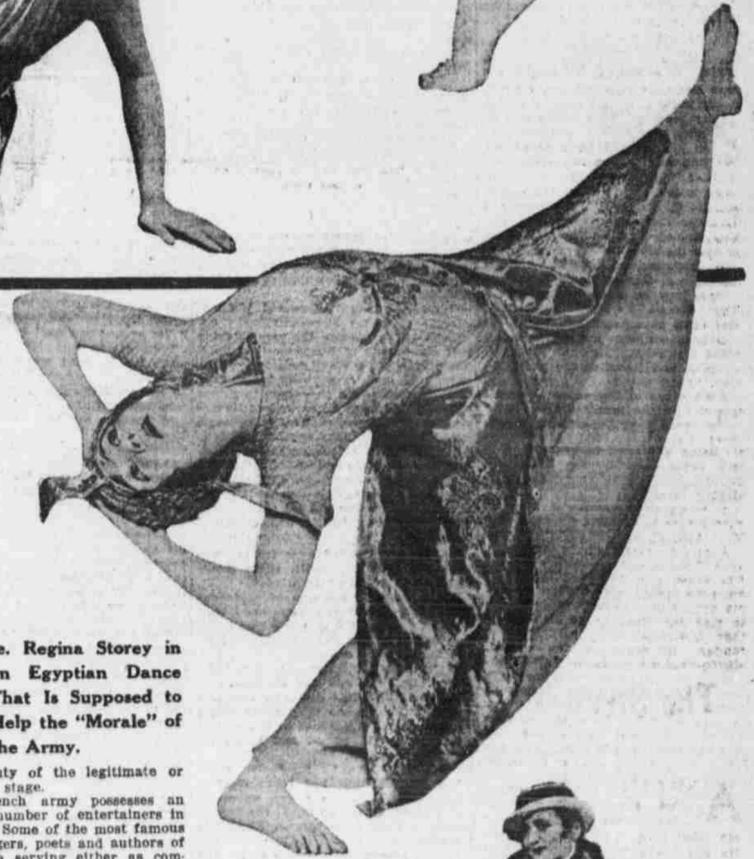
Gaby is a perfectly wonderful girl to cheer up the soldiers. She understands men from top to bottom, but that does not make her a misanthrope, although she is amiably cynical. Her quick perception of the most fundamental masculine weaknesses appeals at once to the frank and simple nature of the soldier, and he laughs heartily at her verbal sallies and is delighted with her songs and dances. An hour with Gaby will drive away the blues from a company of men whose nerves have been strained to the breaking point.

One of the great favorites of the British soldiers is Miss Phyllis Monkman, whose songs and dances have helped many wounded men to recover. Her dances are extremely varied. In one she represents a vestal virgin employed in the rites of sun worship as practised by the ancient Incas of Peru. In another she is a "Boy Scout," while in still another dance she represents a lady of bibulous habits.

Of course, it is not possible in every group of trenches to find a theatrical artist of the talent and personal attractions of those that have been mentioned. The soldiers often organize theatrical and vaudeville entertainments entirely among themselves in which they dress up to imitate the leading stage favorites. It is excruciatingly funny to see a British Tommy decked out with a plentiful supply of paint, false hair and rags struggling to imitate some



Madame Vera Fokina, the brilliant Russian Dancer, whose Graceful Pirouettes Put New Spirit into the Wounded Soldiers. Not, however, in quite so scanty garments.



Mlle. Regina Storey in an Egyptian Dance That Is Supposed to Help the "Morale" of the Army.

noted beauty of the legitimate or music hall stage.

The French army possesses an enormous number of entertainers in its ranks. Some of the most famous actors, singers, poets and authors of France are serving either as common soldiers or subordinate officers. You are not likely to visit a company of French soldiers without finding that they have organized some regular system of entertainment. Sections of the trenches or suitable depressions in the ground are fixed up as theatres with seats and a kind of stage. Names are given to these places of amusement. "Jardin de Paris," "Folies Bergere" and "Moulin de la Chanson" are favorite titles. Officers are sometimes charged for admission. The soldiers employ their French wit in devising amusing signs. "Messieurs the Germans are requested not to shoot the artists" is one of them. Believe me, life in the trenches is not entirely made up of horrors.

Brown Eyes Are Browner in Summer

THE colors of Nature have a regular season. All kinds of pigment, no matter what they be, are at their strongest in the late Spring and early Summer and grow weaker toward the Fall, being at the lowest ebb in Winter.

It is a part of the regular rhythm of Nature which leads gradually through the whole year to the pairing season of the Spring. June is the month of brides in the fields and woods, as well as in the haunts of men. It is then that the flowers are gayest, the birds wear the most brilliant plumage, and even human beings reveal deeper, richer colors in their hair, skin and eyes.

In actual fact, there is a distinct increase in coloration in Summer. Blue eyes become gray and hazel become brown; brown eyes become browner. In the

skin, the pigment or color cells increase, a slight sun-burning taking place, no matter how careful one may be to avoid it. In the same way the hair acquires a greater lustre, just as the Summer coat of many birds is far more lustrous than the dullness of their Winter plumage.

Not only does Nature do this to heighten the attractions of those who come to woo, but also the increase in pigment or color cells is a protection. Our eyes and our skins become accustomed to a certain average amount of light, less in Winter, more in Summer, and in order to keep this balance exactly even, the colors are lessened in Winter so that the whole body may receive more light, and strengthened in Summer so that the surplus of light may be filtered down to the proper amount.



Dainty Gaby Deslys Taking a Convalescent Wounded Soldier for a Ride in Her Motor Cycle and Helping to Restore Him by Her Sparking Conversation.