

HOW FRENCH BEHAVE ON EVE OF BATTLE

Tense Excitement, But No Flurry Marks Hour Preceding an Assault.

French Front.—(By mail).—Tense excitement, but no flurry, reigns along any sector of the French front just before an assault is to be delivered. The men stand to arms coolly as though they were going on to the parade ground. They load their rifles, clean their rifles, load their magazines, loosen their bayonets in their scabbards, fix the straps of their steel helmets or tighten their belts. Some of them sit down with their backs supported by the side of the trench writing what may be their last message to their relatives while waiting for the word to advance. There is no hesitation when this comes. The men, with every confidence in their leaders, all their nerves and muscles taut, clamber out and spring forward and in the recent offensive have always achieved the objective set them by their commanders.

The Associated Press correspondent had an opportunity to be in the midst of one of these movements of preparation at a certain point of the French line somewhere south of the Somme at a time when the allied offensive was pushing forward at great vigor.

In the sector visited by the Associated Press representatives the French and German first line trenches are separated by a distance of from 200 to 300 yards. In between are wide barbed wire entanglements, erected at nighttime after the French had driven the Germans from a village and a wood by surprise. With modern arms the covering of such a distance across open ground by attacking infantry would mean a terrible casualty list. The French, however, were determined to advance. To do so they excavated with great rapidity approaches zig-zagging forward some 50 to 80 yards, where they were joined up by a parallel trench known as the "taking off parallel." From this running still further out saps were cut leading towards the German lines and these were occupied by the French in the morning machine gun emplacements. From the bottom of the taking off parallel steps cut in the earth led up to the level ground. Up these the companies chosen for the assault were to spring on the signal for the departure and spread out in the direction of the German positions towards the German works, previously almost battered out of existence by the French artillery.

The sector was not at all "healthy" when the correspondents visited it. German aeroplanes cruised overhead, emitting a rattling noise. Nothing was about to take place. Their activities were not to the liking of the infantrymen below, who, while not impressed by the dangers of artillery and machine gun fire, object strongly to the appearance on the scene of these aerial intruders.

Artillery curtain fire had been started by the Germans to prevent the arrival of French reinforcements, but its effect on the French troops was almost nil.

The French general commanding the division who has been promoted only recently for brilliant service on the Somme, had spoken with the correspondents before their departure for the front line. They had invaded his post of command on a particularly lively sector of the French line for the time. The general occupies a delectable degree of comfort in his quarters. This caused the general to excuse himself to the correspondents who, he thought, might draw comparisons with his quarters and those of the soldiers. He said: "If I had had this made for myself it would in all probability have meant my being put on the retired list."

As the correspondents left the general remarked: "You may go wherever you like, but I cannot guarantee you immunity from shells or torpedoes. I wish you good luck. See that you come back and have tea with me."

Shells ranging from two-inch pompoms to the big missiles from anti-aircraft howitzers fell intermittently all around at the time. A well kept, wide and deep communication trench with a floor of earth in most places trodden hard by thousands of feet led towards the front line some 4,000 yards away. To go through its intricate twistings and turnings meant a march of 10 miles. The officer appointed as guide, however, decided that for some distance at least it would be comparatively safe for the party to proceed across the open, as a slight haze in the atmosphere hindered the Germans seeing distinctly any movements in the French lines.

This progress, however, did not last long. Shells began to fall with great frequency and it was decided to adopt the more prudent course of entering the communication trench. A couple of miles' march in Indian file led through a destroyed village constantly under fire, especially in the vicinity of batteries, caused the party to make sudden dashes with intervals of 15 yards between each two men. Meanwhile artillery fire became more intense and it was necessary to crouch or lie down very frequently to avoid the splinters of bursting shells.

In this way the front line was reached. The majors in command of the two battalions holding the advanced positions themselves came out of their dugouts to the front and led the way to the parallel of assault from which it was intended to start the attack from the allied line. Only a few men were on duty at the lookout posts, the others having taken shelter in their "funkholes."

They immediately began to display an unfriendly spirit by dropping several bombs, which, however, did no damage. Meanwhile several French flyers approached and a lively exchange of machine gun fire ensued until the Germans returned to their own lines.

In the interval the correspondents were advised on account of the brick-

FORMER N. Y. GIRL IN LONDON SOCIETY



Lady Acheson.

Lady Acheson, a prominent figure in London society, was formerly Miss Mildred Carver of New York. Like so many other members of her set, she is enlisted in work for war sufferers.

ness of the firing to take refuge in the major's dugout. While there they could hear much more plainly than in the open the terrific bombardment by several hundred batteries then in progress. The air was so thick with smoke and the British north of the Somme, the earth seemingly acting as a more delicate conductor than the air. It was afterward learned when the party returned under cover of night to the general's quarters that the British had taken 1,000 prisoners and had made a further advance.

Once upon a time five little rabbits lived with their mother in a nice clean pen. Wee Wee, the smallest one, thought himself very smart, much smarter than any other rabbit that had ever lived.

One day he said to his brothers: "I can fly just like the birds if I want to."

"Oh, no, you can't," said the oldest one. "You can't fly any more than we can."

Wee Wee thought he could and said that the next day, when the other went away, he would show them how high he could fly. The next morning Mrs. Rabbit started out with her basket for market and told the children to be very good and not to get into mischief while she was gone. Wee Wee winked to the other and said he would look out for them, for he was smarter than they were.

When Mrs. Rabbit was out of sight Wee Wee said: "Now I will show you that I can fly." He managed to climb up to the top of a fence and sat there until he had seen the birds fly before they spread their wings for flight.

Then he took one leap, and of course went sprawling down on the ground all in a heap. He hit his head on a stone and he was badly, so badly, in fact, that it was all of a minute before he could stand on his feet again. All of his brothers laughed as hard as they could and would not help him to get up. This made Wee Wee so angry that he said he was going to try it again. His brothers tried to stop him, for they knew that their mother would scold them all if little Wee Wee was hurt, but the bad rabbit climbed the fence and again stretched out his neck to try to fly.

Down he came, bump, bump, bump, on the edge of the fence and caught his foot between the rails where he hung. It tore a big piece of his skin and it began to bleed very badly. Just then his mother turned the corner and saw poor Wee Wee all sore and bleeding. She helped him down and gave him a sound spanking and sent him to bed, for being such a foolish little rabbit as to think he could fly.

Wee Wee never tried to fly again, and now, if he begins to tell what he can do, one of his brothers will say: "Don't forget how you tried to fly," and Wee Wee stops bragging at once.

Slump in Reading.
We haven't time for magazines, nor patience with romances, for our cars and limousines have altered circumstances. We used to sit before the fire, and read the story tellers, the poets who punish sounding lyrics, and all that bunch of fellers. We read up Milton, Milton, Bill—old Bill, the baron of Avon, and strained our intellects until we had to rub some salve on. The bookstovers got our extra change, when we went forth a-shopping; but now, alas—'tis sad and strange—old customs we are dropping. Ere I went out on a shopping expedition, I bought the works of Anna Green and Bertha Clay and Carter. I read all kinds of helpful tomes, indorsed by church and college, I read the tales of Sherlock Holmes, and now my mind with knowledge. But now my books have vanished clean, with all their buckram facings; they had to go for gasoline and inner tubes and casings. I gave John Milton for a tire, and Pope to fix a puncture; I go to soak my priceless lyre, to buy gas, at this juncture.

Dull Campaign.
I wonder what's the matter! The statements read and chatter and yell and scream and toot; but no one seems frightened, and no one gets excited, and no one cares a hoot. We poor, down-trodden voters are busy with our motors, for now the roads are grand; we are now to harken to statesmen and their barkin' of perils in this land. The weather's most enchanting, so we go gallivanting in "sixes," "eights" or "fours;" oh, who would list to yawning, when autumn leaves are dropping, and sunshine's out of door? Let statesmen discuss the tissues of larynx, lung and throat; we will not linger near them, for here's our choocoo boat. Who cares a hoot for a prism for this or 'otherism, since autumn zephyrs blow? Our problems may be deeper—brought about by gasoline—than 'twas a month ago. The statesmen talk and twitter, but where is there a critter who'll list to what they say? The roads are fine and dandy, the good tin car is handy, and so we drive away.

What For.
Mrs. Bacon—I understand that Mrs. Styles took her baby to the opera.
Mr. Bacon—What for, I wonder? The little thing can't talk yet.

THE BEST MAN

By Grace Livingston Hill Lutz
Author of "Marcia Schuyler," "Dawn of the Morning," "Lo, Michael!" etc.

Philadelphia & London.
J. B. Lippincott Company.
1914.

CHAPTER VIII.—(Continued.)

Softly, reverently, he stooped and brought his face close to the opening in the curtains. Celia felt his eyes on her. Her own were closed, and by a superhuman effort she controlled her breathing, slowly, gently, as if she were asleep.

He looked for a long moment, thrilled by the delicate beauty of her sleeping face, filled with an intoxicating joy to see that her lips were no longer white, then, turning reverently away, he unlocked the door and stepped forth.

The other occupants of the car were still wrapped in slumber. Loud snores of various kinds and qualities testified to that. A dim light at the further end of the compartment showed that the daylight now flooding the outside world and creeping mischievously into the transoms.

Gordon closed the door of the compartment noiselessly and went down the aisle to the end of the car. He looked outside, but he could hear voices outside. The conductor stood talking with two brakemen. He heard the words: "Three-quarters of an hour at least," and then the men walked off toward the engine.

Gordon looked across the country, and for a moment since he started on his journey, let himself remember that it was springtime and May.

There had been a bitter wind the night before, with a hint of rain in the air. In fact, it had rained quite smartly during the ride to the hospital with the general, but he had been so perturbed that he had taken little notice of the weather. But this was a radiant morning.

The sun was in one of its most charming moods, when it touches everything with a sort of golden glow and cold. Every tree trunk in the distance seemed to stand out clearly, every little grass-blade was set with a glowing jewel, and the winding stream across a narrow valley fairly blazed with brightness. The very road was deep, clear, and bright, and seemed like a well-lit photograph.

The air had an alluring softness mingled with its tang of winter that made one long to take a walk anywhere out into the world, just for the joy of being and doing. A meadow lark whistled from a bush, and a telegraph pole, let out its blithe note, and hurried on. It was glorious. The exhilaration filled Gordon's blood.

And here was the chance he craved to slip away from the train before it reached a place where he could be covered. If he had but thought to bring his suitcase! He could slip back now without being noticed and get it! He could even go without it! But—he could not leave her that way—could he? Ought he? Perhaps he ought! But it would not do to go to the station with her, for it contained letters addressed to his real name. An explanation would of course be demanded, and he could not satisfy a loving mother and brother for having left a helpless girl in such a situation—even if he could satisfy his own conscience, which he knew he never could. He simply could not leave her, and yet he must get away from that train as soon as possible. Perhaps this was the only opportunity he would have before reaching Buffalo, and it was very risky, indeed dangerous, to dare this. But there it was a foregone conclusion that there would be private detectives ready to meet the train in Buffalo with full descriptions and particulars and only too ready to make way with him if they could so without being found out. He looked nervously about at the door of the car. Dared he attempt to waken her and say that they had made a mistake and must change cars? Was she well enough? And where could they go?

He looked off toward the landscape for an answer to his question. The train stood at the top of a high embankment of cinders, below which was a smooth country road running parallel to the railroad for some distance till it met another road at right angles to it, which stretched away between three meadow-lands to a nestling village. The glorified stream he had first noticed far up the valley glistened narrower here in the morning light, with a suggestion of water-crests and forget-me-nots in its fringes as it veered away under a bridge to another railroad and thence to a tangle of willows and cat-tails.

How easy it would be to slide down that embankment, and walk out that road over the bridge to the village, where of course a conveyance of some sort could be hired to bear him to another railroad and thence to Pittsburgh, perhaps, where he could easily get a train to Washington. How easily if only he were not held by some invisible hands to care for the sweet sleeper inside the car! And yet, for her sake as well as his own, he must do something, and that right away.

He was standing thus in deep meditation, looking off at the little village which seemed so near and yet would be so far for her to walk, when he was pervaded with that strange sense of some one near. For an instant he rested something, and that right away, he bent to himself that no one was present in a doorway which a moment before he knew had been unoccupied. Then, frowning at his own nervousness, he turned.

She stood there in all the beauty of the fresh young girlhood, a delicate pallor on her cheeks, and a deep sadness in her great dark eyes, which were fixed upon him intently, in a sort of puzzled study. She was fully dressed, even to her hat and gloves. Every wave of her golden hair lay exquisitely about her head, and her eyes, which she might have taken an hour or two at her toilet; yet she had made it with excited haste, and with trembling fingers, determined to have it accomplished before the return of her dreaded illegals.

She had sprung from her berth the instant he closed the door upon her, and fastened the little catch to bar him out. She had dashed cold water into her face, fastened her garments hurriedly, and tossed the glory of her hair into place with a few touches, and what hatpins she could find on the floor. Then putting on her hat, coat, and gloves, she had followed him into the outer air. She had a feeling that she must have air to breathe or she would suffocate. A wild desire filled her to go alone into the great out-of-

doors. Oh, if she but dared to run away from him! But that she might not do, for all his threats would then probably be made good by him upon her. Her own was closed, and she must be patient and bear to the end all that was set down for her. But she would get out and breathe a little before he returned. He had very likely gone into the smoker. She remembered that the George of old had been an inveterate smoker of cigars. She would have time for a taste of the morning while he had his smoke. And if he returned and found her gone what mattered it? The inevitable beginning of conversations which she so dreaded would be put off for a time.

She never thought to come upon him standing thus alone, looking off at the beauty of the morning as if he enjoyed it. The sight of him held her still, watching as his sleeping face had held her gaze earlier in the morning. How different he was from what she had expected! How the 10 years had changed him! One could almost fancy it might have changed his spirit also—but for those letters, those terrible letters! The writer of those letters could not change, except for the worse!

And yet, he was handsome, intellectual looking, kindly in his bearing, appreciative of the beauty about him—she could not deny it. It was most astonishing. He had lost that baggy look under his hair, and the weak, selfish, cruel pout of lip she remembered so keenly.

Then he turned, and a smile of delight and welcome lit up his face. In spite of herself, she could not keep an answering smile from glimmering faintly in her own.

"What! You up and out here?" he said, hastening closer to the step. "How are you feeling this morning? Better, I'm sure, or you would not be here so early."

"Oh, I had to get out to the air," she said. "I couldn't stand the car another minute. I wish we could walk the rest of the way."

"Do you?" he said, with a quick, surprised appreciation in his voice. "I was just wishing something like that myself. Do you see that beautiful straight road down there? I was longing to slide down that bank and walk over to that little village for breakfast. Then we could get an auto, perhaps, or a carriage, to take us on to another train. If you hadn't been so ill last night, I might have proposed it."

"Could we?" she asked earnestly. "I should like it so much," and there was eagerness in her voice. "What a lovely morning! Her eyes were wistful, like the eyes of those who weep and wonder why they may not laugh, since sunshine is still yellow."

"Of course we could," he said, "if you were only able." "Oh, I'm able enough. I should much rather do that than to go back into that stuffy car. But wouldn't you think it awfully queer of us to run away from the train this way?"

"They needn't know anything about it," he declared, like a boy about to play truant. "I'll slip back in the car and get my things, and in the meantime of yours I might be in danger of leaving behind."

"No, I put everything in my suitcase before I came out," she said, listlessly, as though she had already lost her desire to go.

"I'm afraid you are not able," he said, pausing solicitously as he scaled the steps.

She was surprised at his interest in her welfare.

"Why, of course I am," she said, insistently. "I have often taken longer walks than that looks to be, and I shall feel much better for being out. I really feel as if I couldn't stand it any longer in there."

"Good! Then we'll try it!" He hurried in for the baggage and left her standing on the cinder road beside the train looking off at the opening morning.

was discovered, and perhaps even prevented. It certainly was better not to have it known where they got off. He had been the precaution to close the stateroom door behind him, and so it might be some time before their absence would be discovered. Perhaps there would be other stops before the train reached Buffalo, in which case he could track the road and get away. He had no doubt that the evil eye of his pursuer was even then upon him.

Celia was already on the ground, looking off toward the little village wistfully. Just how it was to make her get away from him without delay, and train and run away to a strange little village she did not quite explain to herself, but it seemed to be a relief to her pent up feelings. She was half afraid that George might raise some new objection when he returned.

Celia sat watching him, strangely stirred. Her wonder over his kindness grew with each moment, and her prejudices almost dissolved. She could not understand it. There must be something more he wanted of her, for George Hayne had never been kind in the past unless he wanted something of her. She dreaded lest she should soon find it out. Yet he did not look like a man who was deceiving her. She drew a deep sigh. If only it were true and she were that kind and had never written those awful letters! How good and dear it would be to be tenderly cared for this way! Her lips dropped at the corners, and her eyelids drooped in company with the sigh; then Gordon looked up in great distress.

"You are tired!" he declared, pausing in his attempt to fasten the little pearl buttons. "I have been cruel to let you get off the train!"

"Indeed I'm not," said the girl, brightening with sudden effort. At least, she would not spoil the kindness while it lasted. It was surely better than what she had done. "You never can button those shoes with your fingers," she laughed, as he redoubled his efforts to capture a tiny disc of pearl and set it into its small velvet socket. "Here! I have a button-hook in my hand-bag. Try this."

"This produced a small ivory instrument, fastened a gold-link bag on her arm and handed it to him. He took it helplessly, trying first one end and then the other, and succeeding with neither. "Here, let me show you," she laughed, pulling off one glove. Her white fingers grasped the silver button hook, and "knit" never can button those shoes, knitting the little shoe to the foot in no time. He watched the process in humble wonder, and she would not have been a human girl not to have been flattered with his interest and admiration. For the minute she forgot what she had done, and let her fingers ring out merrily; and so with shy audacity he assayed to take off the other shoe.

They really felt quite well acquainted and as if they were going on a day's picnic, when they finally gathered up their belongings and started down the road. Gordon nudged her with his ready wit and intellect to brighten the walk for her, though he found himself again and again on the brink of referring to his Washington life, or some other personal matter that would have brought a wondering question to her lips. But he decided never to tell her what he was, until he could put her in an independent position, where she could get away from him at once if she chose. He was bound to look after her until he could place her in good hands, or at least where she could look after herself, and it was better to carry it out leaving her to think what she pleased until he could tell her everything. If all went well, they might be able to catch a Pittsburgh train that night and be in Washington the next day. Then, his message delivered, he would tell her that which was his story. Until then he must hold his peace.

They went gaily down the road, the girl's pale cheeks beginning to flush with the morning and the exercise. She was not naturally delicate, and her faint the night before had been the result of a series of heavy strains on a heart burdened with terrible fear. The morning and his kindness had made her forget for the time that she was supposed to be walking into a world of dread and sacrifice.

"The year's at the spring, The way's at the morn," quoted Gordon gaily.

"Morning's at seven; The hill-side's dew-pearled—" He waved an umbrella off to where a Jew fished back a thousand lights from its jeweled grass-blades thickly set. "The year's at the morn," quoted Gordon gaily.

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(Continued next week.)

Since the beginning of the war the output of Swiss asphalt mines has decreased.