

PRIVATE CHATTER OF A SOLDIER IN FIRST WAR

I am one of the fellows who made the world safe for Democracy. What a crazy thing that was. I fought and I fought and I fought--but I had to go anyway. I was called in class A. The next time I want to be in class B---be here when they go and be here when they come back. I remember when I registered, I went up to the desk and the man in charge was my milkman. He said, "What's your name?" I said you know my name. What is your name he barked, so I said August Childs. He said, "Are you an alien?" I said, "No, I feel fine." He asked where I was born and I said Pittsburg. Then he said when did you first see the light of day? I said, "When we moved to Philadelphia." He asked how old I was; so I told him twenty-three the first of September. He said the first of September you'll be in France and that will be the last of August.

The day I went to camp, I guess they didn't think I would live long. The first fellow I saw wrote on my card 'Flying Corps! I want a little further and some fellow said, "Look what the wind's blowing in," I said, "Wind nothing, the draft's doing it". On the second morning they put these clothes on me. What an outfit! As soon as you are in it you think you can fight anyone. They have two sizes--too small and too large. The pants are so tight I can't sit down. The shoes are so big I turn around three times and they don't move. And what a raincoat they gave me. It strained the rain. I passed an officer all dressed up with a funny belt and stuff. He said, "Didn't you notice my uniform when you passed?" I said yes, what are you kicking about? Look what they gave me!

It was nice---five below one morning, they called us out for an underwear inspection. YOU talk about scenery--red flannels, B.V.D.'s and all kinds. The union suit I had on would fit Tony Galento. The Lieutenant lined us up

and told me to stand up, I said, "I am up, Sir, this underwear just makes you think I'm sitting down. He got so mad he put me out digging a ditch. A little while later he passed me, Man, he said, "Don't throw the dirt up here." I said, "Where am I going to put it?" He said "Dig another hole and put it there."

Three days later we sailed for France. Marching down the pier I had more luck. I had a Sergeant who stuttered and it took him so long to say "Halt" that 27 of us marched overboard. They pulled us up on the pier, and the Captain said, "Fall in," I said, "I have been in already, Sir."

I was on the boat twelve days--seasick for twelve days. Nothing going down and everything coming up. I leaned over the railing all the time. In the middle of my best leans the Captain rushed up and said, "What company are you in?" I said "I'm all by myself!" He asked if the Brigadier was up yet. I said, "If I swallowed him, he's up." Talk about dumb people--I said to one of the fellows, "I guess we've lost the anchor," and he replied, I know we would. It's been hanging out since we left New York.

Well, we landed in France. We were immediately sent to the trenches. After three nights in the trenches the cannons started to roar and the shells began to pass...I was shaking with patriotism. I tried to hide behind the tree, but there weren't enough trees for the officers. The Captain came around and said, "Five o'clock we go over the top!" I said, "Captain I'd like to have a furlough." He said "Haven't you any red blood in you?" I said, "Yes, but I don't want to see it. At five o'clock we went over the top. Our Captain yelled, "Fire at Will," but I didn't know any of their names. I guess the fellow behind me thought I was Will. He fired his gun and shot me in the excitement----

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