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**LIFE ON TRANSPORT AS SEEN BY PRIVATE;
 FEW HARDSHIPS FOR ENLISTED MEN**

Collegians, Cowboys, Elevator Boys, Leavened in One Lump Between the Decks of Unnamed Ship.

They May Not Smoke After Dark and Must Cheer Boxers Pianissimo—Play Cards Only For Love.

THIS is a real account of life aboard an American transport, written by a private who is now "somewhere in Europe." It is all very well for the accredited correspondents, who cross de luxe, to send back a cheery message to the effect that, except for a few cases of mumps, a pleasant time was had by all, but if you want to know what transport life is really like you must ask a private who has lived it in the bowels of a converted liner, meditated upon it in the long, tranquil hours of midnight sentry duty and jotted it down in his optimistic, freshly acquired diary between exercise and boat drill, between mess and boat drill, between inoculation and boat drill. Here, then, are some brief notes of life aboard a nameless American transport which set sail from an American port some time in August to cross a certain widely known ocean, says the New York Times.

We foregathered from the four quarters of the United States, meeting for the first time at the pier, as, weighted down under our equipment, hunched in our blanket rolls and staggering under our bulging barrack bags, we toiled slowly up the formidable gangways. We all looked pretty much alike that day, and it was not until we had put out to sea and the swarming live and settled down under the subduing pressure of strict military discipline that any one of us could realize what an extraordinary miscellany of men had come aboard.

Some of Those on Board.

Those lean fellows lounging there at the base of the rigging are unmistakably cowboys and probably from Oklahoma; standing against the rail beside them a student of Matisse is talking with a weatherbeaten trainer of prizefighters; the actor who enchanted New York with his brilliant and fastidious performance of the Daffodil in "The Yellow Jacket" is now, with equal skill, charging along the promenade deck, leading a small squad armed with brooms to clean out the gutter. That man washing his mess tin in some no longer useful dishwasher is smoking a Union League club cigarette in his own right and bestowing one, apparently, on an ex-elevator boy of his acquaintance. Way forward on the fore-castle deck, their heads silhouetted against the twilight sky, a group of Princeton boys are singing "Forward March" much as they sang it last fall in the Palmer stadium back home. There are some men reading in what is left of the afternoon sunlight. One has a small copy of "Fluent French Phrases," or some such treatise, by which he is invading for the first time the mysteries of "Je suis, tu es and il est." Next to him a man is poring over the last issue of Breezy Stories, and the man beyond is deep in Browning's "The Ring and the Book." You never can tell. And when the lights go down and the hush falls on the ship they break into little groups to whisper of this or that, to talk of the American league, of theology, of addresses or any subject under the sun except the war. That they leave to those who are on the outside looking in.

They have all weathered the voyage well, philosophically setting down the limitations of their comforts to the exigencies of a great country in a still greater hurry. Some grumbling there is, to be sure, but it is a little like the grumbling of boys at boarding school when for the seventh consecutive day it is prunes again for breakfast.

No Smoking After Sundown.

Of course there have been bitter hardships. It is a bitter hardship, for instance, to have to stop smoking at sundown, but it would never do to have a thousand or so of cigarette tips glowing away until the dim gray transport took on the air of a golden galleon. It is a bitter hardship also for some to go merely as members of an impromptu jazz band to the dances where the officers and nurses foot it neatly in the main saloon. But, greatest privation of all, you are sternly forbidden aboard a transport to yell excessively at the hushed boxing matches between the engineers and a hospital corps, say. You may not join in the leather lunged cries by which one naturally expresses one's emotions in such an hour. You are not allowed to roar out, "Paste him wan in the puss!" or, at least, not too many of you at once. You may not even say "Attaboy!" in chorus. It is very hard.

The officers, noncommissioned officers (some of them), and the nurses take up the first and second cabins. The troops are packed below in quarters that accommodate about 150 each, dim lit dormitories that vaguely recall at night the opium den scene in "The Man Who Came Back," the men sleeping in tiers of three except for those sufficiently alert to take up their shelter halves, ponchos, blankets and life preservers and stake out an early claim of six feet each of deck space. After sundown the decks are literally carpeted with men in olive drab, those sleeping forward on the fore-castle deck being prudent enough to lash their shoe laces to the ironwork lest they roll off in the dark of the moon and be forever ranked as deserters.

On deck, too, the men spread out for mess unless the day be rainy, supplementing the regular fare with such delicacies as they can find at the canteens aboard or as they may have smuggled on, deep down in the barrack bags. On deck, also, the men bathe. At least in one transport they bathe on deck, emerging at chill sunrise to dance un- easily in front of a streaming hose wielded by a deckhand, whose rich reward for his trouble is the pleasure of filling with salt water the occasional shoes left carelessly within his reach. Sometimes you may see an entire battery being drenched at one moment; it is like a much multiplied picture of the old swimming hole.

There is a good deal of work aboard a transport. The various detachments have their organizations to perfect en route, and in the quondam smoking room of happier days there can now be heard the click of many typewriters. Then there is the big business of keeping the troops fed and of keeping them and the ship herself clean. There is plenty of work to do, between boat drills and inoculations.

But it is not all work. There are amusements aplenty—mostly cards. There are some rather frenzied games of craps and banker and broker, accompanied by bent heads, groans, curses and heathenish incantations. Or, rather, there were such games until word of them went aloft and there came down an ominous order forbidding all gambling of any kind. Then there are rubbers of bridge, played with the understanding that the winners will dine some time at the expense of the losers at some boulevard cafe somewhere in France. There are tournaments, too, of bridge and pin- occhie, leading toward prizes offered by the commanding officer. It is no easy thing, by the way, to play cards with the deck as a table when the wind is taking such an interest in the game that it is madness to let a card out of your hand for a moment. Just when you have bid no trumps you are likely suddenly to lose three aces and an un- guarded king.

Then there are entertainments worked up for the hour before sunset. A group of volunteer vocalists is likely to assemble any evening in the forward spar deck and burst into song. Last night it may have been a minstrel show given by the two hospital units. The night before it was a vaudeville bill with every artist a graduate nurse—a triumphant success, by the way, with gundrops and cigarettes thoughtfully provided for the sentries who could not come. For those who could come there was, among other things, one hilarious number that burlesqued the officers at morning exercise.

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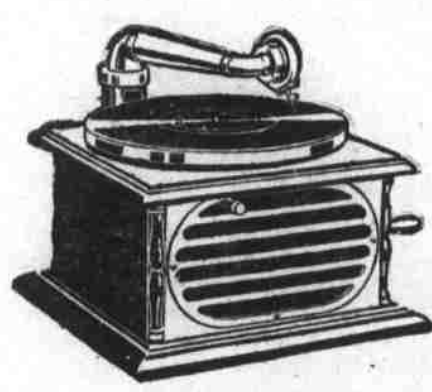


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