

Downers Grove Reporter

Issued every Friday morning from the office of the Downers Grove Publishing Company, 37 North Main Street, Downers Grove, Illinois.

C. H. STAATS, EDITOR

Entered at the Downers Grove Post Office as second class mail matter. Advertising rates made known upon application. Subscription rates \$1.75 per year. Single copies 5c.



"And The Star Spangled Banner Forever Shall Wave,
O'er The Land of The Free and The Home of The Brave."



LETTERS FROM DOWNERS GROVE SOLDIER BOYS

REV. GREY WRITES INTERESTINGLY OF LIFE IN FRANCE

Dear G—

This is my first opportunity to write you since coming to my post of duty here, and I'm afraid I'll not get very far with my letter tonight as it is late and the light in our "apartment" isn't the best. It is an age since I wrote my last letter from Nancy. Wish I could put on paper my impressions and experiences since I left there and arrived in this queer little, smelly, ancient French village on this sector of the American front. I left Nancy after lunch on Friday via the omnibus and ever dependable Ford route, in tow of a skilled "Y" driver. Our immediate destination was Noviant, the "Y" Divisional Headquarters, about 18 miles from Nancy. We came up thru a most interesting country, an area in which one of the greatest drives of the entire war was being prepared against the Germans. Stupendous preparations were almost complete for such an onslaught as would have knocked the enemy silly, had the war lasted a few days or weeks longer. What one sees here helps to explain the feverish haste of the Germans to get an armistice signed. They knew what was coming. We passed by part of the old German positions, which they held for so long and which were prepared evidently with the idea of a long occupation, for they had concrete walls and floors and every convenience possible in such a place, even electric lights. On top they were cleverly camouflaged to hide them from aerial observers. Our men deserve unbounded praise for the way they drove the smug German out of these strong positions. Ruined villages along the line speak eloquently of the fury of war. Many of them are only an imaginary spot on the map, ground to powder. Others are still abandoned, and some few have resumed civil life again, with American troops and equipment everywhere in evidence. Noviant is typical. The people are coming back to their homes to rebuild and start life anew. So also here, altho Martincourt has not been materially damaged, only evacuated. When I reported at Noviant at our headquarters, in a little old shack with ground floor, I was assigned to this place for the time being with Dr. B. S. Binford, the Secretary in charge. Martincourt is about 5 kilometers, or 3 miles from Noviant. It is located in a valley, quite prettily. But dear, O dear, what a habitation! One steps back from the 20th century several hundred years. These ancient dwellings for man and beast, if such a distinction can be made, are hard to describe. One sees them depicted in rustic pictures, such as the one on Mr. Downer's calendar, only when you get on the scene all the romance immediately vanishes. The picture conveys no idea, nor can it register temperatures. Here we ate in the most spacious and pretentious building in town (the church perhaps excepted) in an 8x15 foot room on the second floor of what we would call at home a barn. The heavy stone walls give a certain distinction to the building, though we have one north window which can be opened. Below us is a 30x30 room which is our palatial "Y" resort with canteen. The building also houses the public school of the village which is attended by a dozen or more children, dressed in quaint, home-made, and often wearing wooden shoes. Most of the buildings in town are at least occupied by soldiers but their terms are not long and in many cases they are

row the village is to be evacuated of most of the troops quartered here. We are to stay for a few days until further instructions. The 21st Machine Gun Battalion of the 7th Division and the 22nd Ambulance Company are at present quartered here and will move to Gezoncourt, a few miles from here, tomorrow. Dr. Binford, a dentist from Greenfield, Ind., has done a wonderful work here. He is a magnificent fellow and the men adore him. With almost no equipment he has somehow managed to serve the men, until a few days ago in a miserable shack with ground floor. The need for live, consecrated men up here is most urgent. These men, all attached to combatant units, have been cut off from civilized life for many months and this is the only place where they can spend their leisure hours and enjoy themselves. The day before I arrived a little graphophone came on the scene, the only musical instrument around, except my folding organ which I brought. And it is kept going incessantly from morning until closing time at night. You ought to see the men hang around it and drink in the scratchy music, which, at home would provoke one. The two records they work overtime are "Mother McCree," and "Somewhere a Voice is Calling." One poor chap who was in the thick of the fighting said he hadn't heard any instrumental music since last August. These boys stir one's admiration. They are sturdy, manly fellows, appreciative of what we do for them and hungry for comradeship such as the Y. M. C. A. offers. I don't wonder that the Germans got cold feet with such a body of huskies after them. I pitched in at once Friday night and yesterday helping with the canteen and getting acquainted and have been well received. O course, I felt strange and new to the situation, among these veterans, but am finding myself rapidly. Talk about good cheer! With mud, mud, mud, and drizzle, and stench and squalor, multiplied by drudgery and monotony, on every side, so that even a supposedly gloomproof Y. M. C. A. Secretary feels his heart sink within him and wish himself 4,000 miles to westward, this same "Y" man hears as the first sounds of the day the whistle of a doughboy and a good-natured, if somewhat rough chafing, of a passing companion. And that after months of hardship and isolation and separation from home! Yet you must not think that he doesn't think of home. He thinks of nothing else! It's the main topic of conversation and absorbs his whole being—HOME! Monday, 5 p. m. At this point the candle had burned low and I turned in "to my little trundle bed", which by the way, is quite a combination. On top of a canvas folding cot I stretch my water-proof roll-up. Inside of this I double, fold, and tuck my five allotted blankets, light material that looks like overcoating, making a sort of horizontal sack. Into this I push reached the end. For a pillow raise I have two shallow cigar boxes, nail-myself feet foremost until I have ed end to end which I put underneath the "mattress." The first night I nearly froze. The temperature is barely below freezing, but how it penetrates! Like Puget Sound, only much worse. What our boys and the allied soldiers suffered out in the open no one at home can ever imagine. Indeed you people in America can form no idea of what this life has meant to our boys. No honor which the American people can do them is too great for all they have endured. I hope they will show their appreciation by fully subscribing the next Liberty Loan issue in April. Yesterday morning at 10:00 o'clock I held my first service with the men up here. I had heard so many varying reports regarding religious effort among the fighting units that I approached this first appointment with some anxiety. My heart was full of longing to help these dear fellows as I carried my little organ down and got ready for the meeting. I was

not disappointed. We had a good attendance and the men took part heartily. Most hadn't been at a religious service in many months. Today Mr. Cameron, a "Y" man temporarily billeted with us, and I went out for a hike, up the hill above the village where the remains of American gun emplacements and trenches are still fresh. Back of them are reminders of the German occupation of this district in 1914. Martincourt was occupied by the Germans in September of that year and all the male population driven out at the point of the sword. The German commander then told the people that the greatest war in history was begun, that Germany would take France and conquer England and dominate the world. We got a fine view of the village from the hill, nestled in the valley by a winding stream. There is absolutely nothing modern here. One of the more modern houses bears the date 1774, before the American Republic was born! Everything is primitive from the stone, tile-roofed houses with earthen floors and hewn out wash sinks, to the wells without pumps in the basements. On the hill stands a chateau 1,200 years old. During the recent fighting most of the inhabitants moved away, but now want to return. My, how they can come back to live in these old dingy dungeons! But then they know nothing better. I watched the dozen school children play at recess this morning, and they danced as if skipping just as all children do, while the teacher, a woman, stood by and prompted them. I wonder what normal school she graduated from! Now I must close. Give my best regards to Downers Grove friends. M. (Rev. I. M. Grey).

**DONALD MCKEE
MAKES PLEA FOR
FOREIGN STRIPES**

February 12, 1919.
Editor, Downers Grove Reporter,
Downers Grove, Illinois.

Dear Mr. Staats:

I noticed a piece in the European edition of the Chicago Daily Tribune the other day that caused myself and the rest of the men of this outfit a great deal of consternation. The article was to the effect that some people in the States were trying to do away with the Foreign Stripe as worn by the A. E. F. as it shows discrimination between the men who were lucky enough to get to France and go thru the hardships and Hell that they have gone thru and the men who were forced to remain in the States. Forty per cent of the men who did not get over here, could not help it, but the rest of them could have done so if they had cared to. These men were not so anxious to get over here while the war was going on, but as soon as it was over, they raised a hue and cry because, as they say, they were unfortunate in not getting over here. I am not writing this to slam the Drafted man, because I have a great deal of respect for most of them, but it is for the benefit of those who are kicking.

The men who have been in the A. E. F. and earned their service stripes are proud of them and the real meaning of them is that the bearer has done his bit. Most of the men have been for weeks in the trenches without changing their clothing, eating nothing but canned beef and hard bread, not knowing which moment would be their last. Those men deserve some discrimination from those who did not get over here.

I hope that some of the people will agree with me and take action against this movement.

Sincerely,
Donald E. McKee.

STANLEY BARAN GIVES ITINERY OF 6TH MARINES

Stanley Baran, who as a member of the 6th Marines, saw some of the hardest fighting of the war, in a letter to his brother-in-law here tells where the company has been. Wounded three times, he is now back with his company keeping "the watch on the Rhine."

Leutendorf, Germany, Jan. 29th, 1919.

"Just a few lines to let you know I am in good health and hope you and the rest of the family are the same. Well after leaving the hospital we got in first class box cars and after we rode for a few days and nights I knew we were off for Jerry-land and back to our company. Its rather hard to snap in and do squads east and west after staying three long months in the hospital.

"We are along the old Rhine river and it sure is pretty.

"Here's where we've been:
2nd Div. Hdqrs., established in France October 28th, 1917.
Verdun Sector, March 15th to May 15th, 1918.
Chateau Thierry, June 1st to July 16th.
Soissons, July 17th to 23d.
St. Mihiel, September 11th to 25th.
Champagne, October 1st to 10th.
Woever, November 1st to 11th.
March to the Rhine, November 11th to December 11th, 1918.

Prisoners captured, 228 officers; 11,738 men.
Guns captured, 343 pieces of artillery; 1,350 machine guns.
Total advance on front line, 60 kilos.

Yours truly,
Stanley J. Baran.

It has been many moons since Marguerite Clark has shown herself in so appealing a picture as "Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch," which will be shown at the Dicke Theatre, Friday, March 7th, and Saturday March 8th. To put it in a few words, it is a bit of human life portrayed by human characters; and it gets you under the skin. adv.

Has Any One

- Died—
- Eloped—
- Divorced—
- Had a fire—
- Embezzled—
- Left Town—
- Had a baby—
- Sold a farm—
- Had a party—
- Came to town—
- Been arrested—
- Had twins or colic—
- Sold a cow or lost an auto—
- Laid in a stock of whisky—
- Stolen a dog or his friend's wife—
- Committed suicide, or murder—
- Fallen from an airplane or—
- Fallen into a coal hole or—
- Fallen into a legacy?

That's News!

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Direction Hillford Campbell.

Friday and Saturday, Mar. 7th & 8th

See

THE PICTURE YOU WILL NEVER FORGET —
Friday Night and Saturday Matinee and Night

Mabel Normand

"MICKEY"

!!!!

Two years ago Sennett promised us "Mickey" and two weeks ago he gave it to us. "Mickey" was worth the two years wait. It comes but once in a life time. Hair raising thrills, sparkling with humor, bubbling with laughter and pathos that will dig deep into your heart, that's "Mickey."

Whether or not you are a movie fan or whether or not you think the movie theatre ought to be in existence, this is the one picture you cannot afford to miss! It is a play that has everything imaginable that might be conceived by the most inventive producer. "Mickey" is the highest priced moving picture that has ever played Downers Grove with one exception and that exception is "The Common Cause," which will soon be seen for two days at THE CURTISS.

FRIDAY NIGHT PRICES. Children, 10c; Adults, 29c. net
SATURDAY MATINEE. Children, 5c; Adults 10c. NIGHT. 10 and 29c.

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