

THE LEGION

Chaplain Prentice on Actualities
And Potentialities

(Reprinted from the *Berwyn Beacon, Berwyn, Ill., at the especial request of local Legionnaires.*)

Only you who were in service can appreciate the peculiar conditions under which American men lived. Perhaps the greatest need of all was for friendship. This was most keenly felt in France. Strangers in a strange land, embarked upon an adventure of cruel uncertainty, American men quite naturally looked to one another for that which those who spoke a strange tongue could not give. Men knew only this: Fellow Americans thought the same thoughts and spoke the same language. "Buddies" knew neither class distinctions nor caste ties. Out of the good fellowship and warm friendships of the army The American Legion was born. After the Armistice had been signed and the army was waiting to come home, men of vision saw that unless an organization were speedily formed the ties would soon be broken and their possible value lost to America. These same men of vision were idealists, too. They knew that whatever was the prime factor in America's entering the World War, thousands of our soldiers were fired and inspired by a desire to uphold the finest traditions of the nation; likewise thousands were knights of civilization entering the lists in the common cause of humanity. That friendships might be preserved and that idealism might be conserved is the real reason this organization of ex-service men was brought into existence. Out of the friendships and ideals of the army The Legion was born. Because France was the Mecca of all comrades in 1917 and 1918, it was fitting that the organization should take form and

breathe the breath of life "over there." However, because every man's heart was in the lines though his body might be elsewhere, it was proper that all men who had seen service, whether at home or overseas, should be eligible for The Legion. It has been necessary to recall so much of our history in order to impress the principles upon which the organization was founded, that from them you may see what the organization has done and what it may and will become.

The Legion has every reason to be proud of its life and work since the day of its inception. Its first task was that of inquiring into the needs of its comrades and their families. Unfortunately a grateful nation soon forgets the reason for its gratitude and the needs of those to whom it owes a debt of gratitude. It has been the sacred and solemn duty of The American Legion to fight the bloodless battles of peace in behalf of its comrades whose wounds of body and scars of mind had otherwise been neglected and forgotten. There are those in our own community, bereaved and destitute families, bruised and broken bodies of comrades, who have received tender care and financial assistance because the local post did not forget and would not allow the nation to forget.

This record is no vainglorious boast of achievements; it is but a simple statement of facts. The idealism of war days has been translated into the service of communities to which men returned. It is not too much to say that every worthy community cause has found a friend in The Legion.

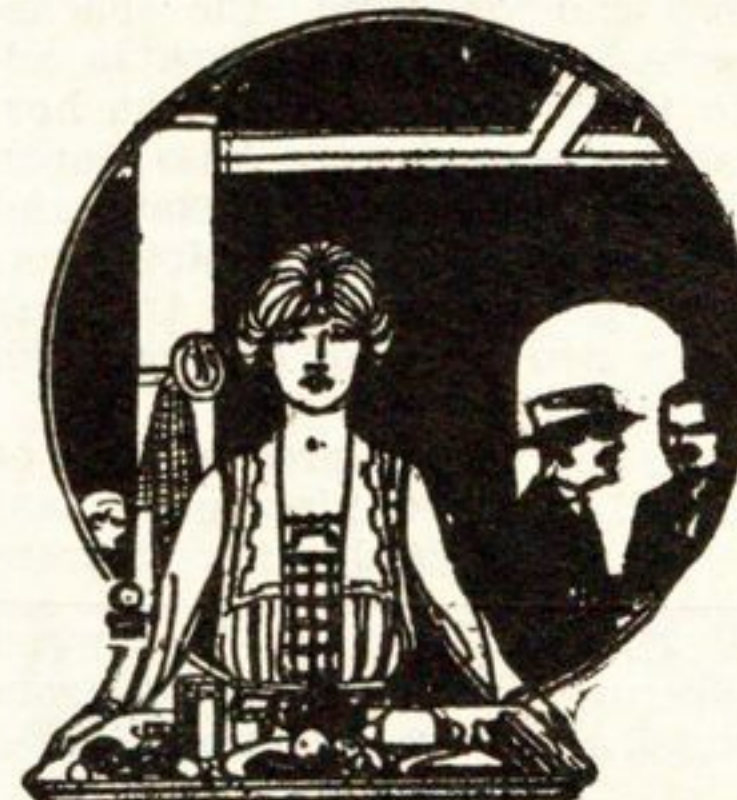
In our own town more than one civic organization or project has asked and received the co-operation and assistance of our own Berwyn Post. You who are familiar with the history of the past three years will recall many occasions when The Legion has answered the call of the community.

While we look with pride upon the past we peer into the future with anticipation and eagerness. Other wars have proved that the further men are removed from the actual days of the war the more closely are the participants drawn together. It is within the realm of possibility that ten years from now this organization will have doubled or tripled its present membership. An organization with a possible membership of 4,000,000 men will be a mighty factor in the life of the nation. Were the Legion founded on grounds other than those of friendship and idealism one might well fear its power and influence. Bound by a sacred pledge, committed to a fixed policy, this will never become a political body. The task still confronting the Legion is discharging in full its obligation to comrades who deserve the sympathy of the nation and have earned the paternal care of the government. This must be done! Then there will still remain much to accomplish before the organization shall have finished its course. In hundreds of thousands of American communities there is a group of men committed to the care of humanity and the safeguarding of America. What a powerful force this can and will become! Each community may be sure that everything which furthers the interests and promotes the good feeling of the community will receive the support of this great group of men. Throughout the coming years a group of men side by side with all who would make

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