ALLEN FRENCH

AT PLATTSBURG

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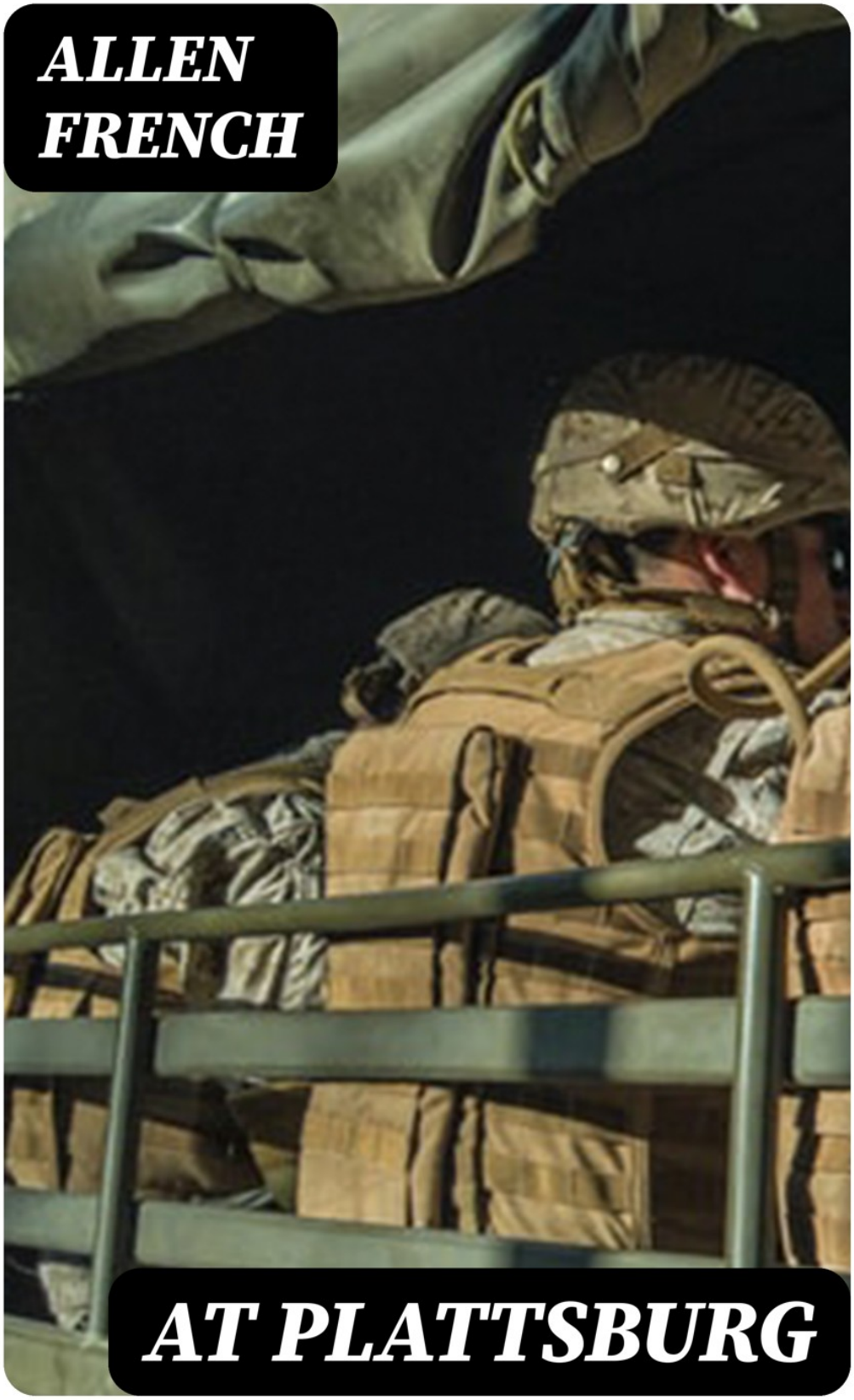

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Allen French

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Richard Godwin to His Mother

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On the train, nearing Plattsburg.

Friday morning, Sep. 8, 1916.

Dear Mother:—

Though you kissed me good-by with affection, you know there was amusement in the little smile with which you watched me go. I, a modest citizen, accustomed to shrink from publicity, was exposed in broad day in a badly fitting uniform, in color inconspicuous, to be sure, but in pattern evidently military and aggressive. What a guy I felt myself, and how every smile or laugh upon the street seemed to mean Me! The way to the railroad station had never seemed so long, nor so thronged with curious folk. I felt myself very silly.

Thus it was a relief when I met our good pastor, for I knew at the first glance of his eye that my errand and my uniform meant to him, as they did to me, something important. So strong was this comforting sense that I even forgot what importance he might attach to them.

But fixing me with his eye as I stopped and greeted him (being within easy hurrying distance of the station) he said in pained surprise: “And so you are going to Plattsburg?”

Then I remembered that he was an irreconcilable pacifist. Needing no answer, he went on: “I am sorry to see that the militarist spirit has seized you too.”

Now if anything vexes me, it is to be told that I am a militarist. “Not that, sir,” said I. “War is the last thing that I want.”

“Train a man to wield a weapon,” he rejoined, “and he will itch to use it.” I think we were both a little sententious because of the approach of the train. “Your argument is, I suppose, that the country is in danger?”

“Exactly,” I replied.

He raised both hands. “Madness! No one will attack us.”

I refrained from telling him that with so much at stake I was unwilling to accept even treaty assurances on that point. He went on. “The whole world is mad with desire to slay. But I would rather have my son killed than killing others.”

He is proud of his son, but he is prouder of his daughter. Said I, “If war comes, and we are unprepared for it, you might have not only your son killed, but your daughter too.”

Horrified, he had not yet begun to express himself on the impossibility of invasion, when the train came. So we parted. To tell the truth, I am not sorry that he feels so: it is very ideal. And I regret no longer having my own fine feeling of security. It is only a year or so ago that I was just such a pacifist as he.

If I in my new uniform was at home a curiosity, when I reached Boston I found myself merely one among many, for the North Station was full of Plattsburgers. There is great comfort in being like other folk. A thick crowd it was at our special train, raw recruits with their admiring women-folk or fun-poking friends. The departure was not like the leaving of soldiers for the front, such as we saw in July when the boys went to Texas. We should come back not with wounds, but with a healthy tan and much useful experience. So every one was jolly, except for a young couple that were walking

up and down in silent communion, and sometimes furtively touching hands—a young married pair, I thought, before their first separation.

We were off without much delay, a train-load wholly of men, and all greenhorns. For all of us had nice fresh crinkly blouses, and olive-drab (properly o. d.) knees not yet worn white (as I have seen on returning Plattsburgers) while our canvas leggings were still unshaped to our manly calves. Our hats were new and stiff, and their gaudy cords were bright. And we were inquisitive of the life that was ahead of us, readily making acquaintance in order to compare our scraps of information. Dismay ran here and there with the knowledge that the typhoid inoculation required three weekly doses. Thank goodness, that is over with for me. We tried to be very soldierly in bearing, evidently an effort in other cases than mine. One fellow had his own gun along; he wanted, he said, to make a good score on the range. So I had my first chance to handle an army rifle.

You know that when I left, you had been worrying as to how I should stand the strain of the coming month’s work. I will admit that I have been wondering about it myself. I have worked very hard for the last few years, practically without vacation, in order to marry as suited Vera’s ideas. And then, two years after she had said Yes, and when my earnings ought to satisfy any woman, began the complex strain of the breaking of the engagement—the heart burnings, the self-searching, the difficult coming to an understanding. And now that she and I have parted friends, with both of us quite satisfied, I have been realizing how much run down I am, so that it has seemed quite possible that Plattsburg life might

be too strenuous for me. But a good look at my companions has made it clear that I can stand up with the average of them. A fair number of them, to be sure, are brown and seasoned by the summer. But quite as many are pale and stooped from desk work, or pasty from good living. If I fall out, I shall have plenty of company.

I write this letter while the train is approaching Plattsburg. When I woke this morning we were at a standstill in some railway yard, and beside us was standing another train, labelled like ours, doubtless carrying the New York men. It drew out ahead of us, and I suppose its inmates are now debarked, and gawking about them as presently my companions and I shall gawk. Tonight I shall write again. Affectionately

Dick.

David Ridgway Farnham, 3d, to His Mother

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On the Train to Plattsburg.

Friday morning, Sept. 8th.

Dear Mama:—

It is unlucky that both of our cars were out of order just when I was starting for Plattsburg. For the train has been very hot and stufy, and so crowded. I tried once more to get myself a statroom, but when the agent said I should have to be with three other men, then I just gave up, and got the porter to make up my upper birth early, and climbed into it

though I wasn’t sleepy at all. But it was something to get by myself and be a little privat.

I spoke to a few of the fellows, but I couldn’t make much out of them. One had never been to college, and another knew nothing of automobiles, and another began talking about the drill regulations, but you know I never even bought the book. The whole train was one big smoking car, and some fellows near me were very noisy over a game of poker.

I suppose I shall mannage to get along with these fellows, because I know I must if I want what father promised me, and if the fellows at the Casino aren’t to laugh at me. But so far as I can see, everyone on the train isn’t at all my kind. Father doesn’t understand how I feel about fellows who are not in our set. I don’t look down on them, you know, for I’m sure most of them are very nice fellows of their sort. But I never knew anyone of their kind before, and what am I to talk to them about? Its all very well for father to say that I can get something worth while from every man I meet; but he’s a business man, and so he’s used to them.

You mustn’t think I’m unhappy if I say I shall miss you and shall hate to be confined by the camp regulations. I’m not going to back out for father and cousin Walt have put it up to me to see the thing through and though I’m kind of used to disapointing father I don’t intend that Walt shall think I’m sandless.

But when the camp breaks up you must be sure to be here, with the Rolls-Royce, to take me home. I don’t think I could stand another trip like this. Love from,

David.

Private Richard Godwin to His Mother

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Plattsburg Camp.

Friday evening, Sept. 8.

Dear Mother:—

I had scarcely finished my letter of this morning when the train began to slow down, and then drew up alongside a wide and gently sloping field, while on the other side was the lake. With our luggage we poured out into the field, evidently our training ground, since beyond it were tented streets, with some big open-sided buildings that doubtless had some military use, since we saw rookies going in and out. In haste to get our share of what was to be had, we consulted the printed slips handed to us in the train.

“On arriving at camp: First, Carry your hand baggage to the Y.M.C.A.”

Where was the Y.M.C.A.? There was no building standing near of even so much as two stories. There were tents and there were shacks, but even when we came to a street busy with electrics, automobiles, motor trucks, and foot passers, nothing of any size was to be seen. But as I followed along with the rest, noting that almost everybody we met, from the riders in the autos to the drivers of the trucks, was military, I saw a skeleton structure, tar-paper-roofed, and bearing the magic letters for which we were looking. There regulars—artillerymen with red-corded hats—received our bags through the open frontage and stored them alphabetically.

“Second. Go to the mess-shacks for breakfast.”

We went. We breakfasted. The mess shacks were those other open-sided buildings on the drill-field which I had already seen; their construction, being merely tarred roofs on posts and walled with mosquito netting, promised no elegance of fare. Nor was the fare elegant: milk, coffee, cereal, hard boiled eggs, bread, butter, a bruised apple. The milk was of two kinds, real and canned. Used in the coffee, or with sugar on the cereal, the canned milk was good enough as poured from a hole punched in the container; but a wise man near me prophesied that I should not like to drink it when diluted. Flat, he said. Tasted like chalk. Doubtless it was chemically correct, but (you see how scientific he was) the metabolism of the body despises chemical synthesis, and for real nourishment the palate must be satisfied.

“Third. At once after breakfast go to the Adjutant’s Office and enroll.”

So we stood in line, and when on nearing the window of the office I heard the Adjutant say to a predecessor, “Where’s your thirty dollars?” I got out my greenbacks and presently paid them in, twenty-five for our maintenance at camp, five to be returned if during our stay we had not damaged any of Uncle Sam’s property. And since the adjutant assigned me to a company, I began to feel that I was getting somewhere.

“Fourth. Exchange your baggage checks for camp claim checks.”

None of that for me. I had known enough to bring but a large suit-case, leaving behind everything that I could persuade myself was unnecessary. There was a

memorandum on the printed slip to the effect that trunks and other large pieces of baggage would be stored at the post barracks, where owners could visit them on Sunday mornings. A sad weekly ceremony for one who had to choose from an excess of luxuries!

“Fifth. Report to the officer commanding your Company.”

I did not find him. Though again I stood in line, this time with men with whom I was to associate, those to whom I reported in the Orderly Tent at the head of H company street were but sergeants and volunteers like myself, though men of more experience, as I could tell by their weathered uniforms and faded hat-cords. They filled out a card concerning me, led me to the tent pole, and measuring my height with a crude but effective instrument, announced “Tent Eight.”

“Sixth. Bring your hand baggage to your tent.”

So I brought it from the Y.M.C.A. Now the topography of the camp is thus. Just within the enclosure, and parallel with the street outside, runs the officers’ street, their tents along one side of it, each with its little sign bearing the occupant’s name. From the other side, toward the drill ground and the lake, lead away the company streets with double rows of khaki tents facing each other. All were on a thin and barren soil, where between the tents some few weeds straggled, while everywhere else men’s feet had killed all growth. No! For in front of one of the tents, under the protection of its ropes, grew a half-dozen thrifty pansy plants, all in bright bloom. But elsewhere all was brown sand that looked as if it might blow dust in clouds, but which also, I was glad to see, looked as if it might absorb all ordinary rains. The street,

about midway of its length, rose a little, then dropped, and straddling this ridge I found Tent 8, in the best possible position should the weather turn wet. As I entered, stooping, I peered about the shadowed interior.

The dry floor was ploughed into holes and ridges by the feet of the last occupants. One man, bearded and grizzled, was sitting on a cot in one corner, exploring the interior of a big blue canvas bag; a professor or doctor person, who gave me one keen glance, briefly said “Good day,” and went on with his occupation. A second bed, already neatly set up and equipped, stood in another corner. Its owner, lithe and keen, a fellow of about twenty-five, was watching a third, man-sized but boy-faced, who was struggling with a cot in its chrysalis stage, being apparently quite unable to unfold it. I knew the lad at a glance, young David Ridgway Farnham 3d, whose cousin Walter was in my class, to whom I was best man, as you remember, some five years ago. Now young David has been the laughing stock of the family, spoiled with riches and an indulgent mamma. Walter told me that many tutors, on princely salaries, just managed to get him through Harvard this year. And here he was at Plattsburg! However, he couldn’t know me, so I disposed my things in a corner.

The lithe and keen person seemed lither and keener at second glance. He was of a splendid blond type, with flashing blue eyes; everything about him was perfectly straight, his backbone, his nose, his close-cropped fair hair, the thin-lipped mouth, the drop of his chin, and even the precipitous fall of his high cheek-bones. He had not noticed me at all, so intent was he on the struggles of young

Farnham. A very efficient person he seemed, and immediately proved it. For Farnham, with that appealing helplessness which I remember in him as a charming child (you know that with his brown eyes, curly hair, and rosy skin he's as handsome as a girl) looked up at his watcher. He immediately said: "Bend the leg the other way. Now the next one. Now spread the whole thing out. Now spring those two cross-pieces into place." But even then, though the cot had gained a recognizable shape, Farnham was still baffled. His hands were soft, and so were his muscles. "This way," said the other after a moment. And sitting on the cot, with his feet he forced the cross-bar at one end into position, then swung about and put the other one into place, and the thing was done.

"Thanks," said young David, politely but not warmly, in a way that showed how used he is to being waited on. "Have a cigarette? I suppose we shall—er—room together. My name is Farnham."

"Mine is Knudsen," said the other. And then I appreciated the cause of his blondness.

"I'm from Harvard, class of 'sixteen," said young David. Well-grown as he is, I couldn't help thinking of him as young.

"I'm from Buffalo," said Knudsen shortly. "I run a foundry there." His blue eyes were unwavering and quite expressionless as he looked Farnham over.

"Farnham? Farnham?" said the man with the short pointed beard. The others turned and looked at him. "I remember now. You were in my section in English A, your Freshman year."

“Oh,” said young David. “Professor Corder. Of course. How de do? I remember that you flunked me.”

“But you got through English D after two tries,” said Corder. “Such is college life.”

As none followed up the subject, I asked where they got their equipment. On their direction I went to the store-tent at the head of the street, where on the strength of my signature an obliging regular intrusted to me various listed articles, which I lugged to the tent.

This domicile is in the shape of a pyramid on a three foot wall, about sixteen feet on a side, the whole supported by a solid post held by an iron tripod. The tent contains eight beds, the corporal’s always to the right of the entrance, the others in a mystic order which I will not bother you with. As yet we did not know how we were to fall in, but I set up my cot modestly among the rear rank, put under it my suit case, laid on the cot a mattress and pillow, properly cased in light duck, and garnished the whole with three blue blankets which promise comfort in this September weather. And then I dove into the blue bag.

First on the list, a sweater, o. d., like all the outfit, and very heavy.

A poncho. A rubber oblong with button-holes along three sides, and a slit, provided with a collar, less than halfway down the middle.

A shelter-half. That was the strangely shaped piece of brown duck, in pattern something like a big old-fashioned kite, with unsymmetrical button-holes and loops of rope.

Five tent-pins. Aluminum, ridged and bent.

A pack. A queerly outlined piece of canvas, provided with straps of webbing, wider or narrower, with buckles, rings, and a big pocket. Its attachments numerous and incomprehensible.

A cartridge belt. Easily recognized, with its many pockets and numberless eyelets.

A first-aid kit. In a sealed tin box, buttoned in a pocket attached to the belt.

A canteen in a cloth case. Not flat and circular, but solid and bulky.

A bacon tin. Hm—a small box?

A condiment can. A double ended contraption, in one end of which had once been powdered chocolate.

A meat can. An oval sauce-pan, with a lid over which the hinged handle shuts down.

A knife, fork, and spoon.

I stuffed them away again, shed my blouse, as I saw the others were doing, and was therefore ready when, our squad having filled up, the call came for us to fall in. Out into the street we tumbled, each of the dozen and a half tents furnishing a squad, the squads falling in according to number. The sergeants formed us, got us into column of squads, and marched us away down the public street, where military persons of all kinds went by, from lone privates to officers driving automobiles, and where the only notice taken of us was by civilians in motor-parties, who came to see our zoo.

So here I was, for the first time in my life marching in the ranks, like any private not knowing where or why. For a quarter, a half, three quarters of a mile we went at a quick

pace on the macadam, till my soft tissues knew what was meant by the “hammer, hammer, hammer on the hard highway.” And my misery had plenty of company. The man in front of me, a bulky person, was wringing wet, and I saw another fellow with the sweat actually dripping off his chin. It was a welcome relief to turn in at a big gate, pass between brick buildings, and come onto a great grass field across which we marched directly toward a building with a long portico, on which the sight of rookies waiting promised us rest. Very willingly we broke ranks at command. We learned from our predecessors that we were there for physical examination.

When our turn came at last it was all very brisk and business-like, and soon I was passed as being sound in body and feet. With most of us the ordeal was equally successful; but one poor chap sat melancholy in a blanket, waiting for a second test. Then I straggled back to camp with Professor Corder, who confessed himself just under the age-limit of forty-five. In spite of his successful examination he acknowledged a little anxiety as to whether he could stand the work; has coddled himself, he acknowledges, for years; worries about the effect of woollen stockings: I imagine that most men of his age here have some such anxiety.

When enough of us had dribbled back to camp we were again assembled, and were taken down to the drill-field by the sergeant. And there for the first time in my life I saw a West Pointer at his work. He appeared from somewhere, and the sergeant handed us over to him. A tall and lithe fellow he is, so graceful that not even his military carriage can disguise it. He has an olive-dark skin, hair that curls at the

temples, black eyes, nose straight and thin, and lips curving like a woman’s. Give him the drooping mustache of older days, and what a romantic figure he would make! I knew him at once for a Southerner, from his coloring, his physical beauty, and a slight trace of languor, real or affected.

But he knew his business. There is an uncertainty about the sergeants, as thinking “Am I doing this right?” But though he looked at us out of eyes that were a little sleepy his tenor was clear as a silver bugle, and (if you can excuse the mixture of similes) it snapped like a whip. No hesitation, nor even any thought as to what he should do next. We straightened at the first command he flung at us, and in three minutes we were working to please him. The position of a soldier! Was there the slightest spark of amusement in his eyes as he described it to us, as if to say “You mob of clerks and manufacturers and professional men can’t really take this position”? I never “lifted and arched” my chest so thoroughly. Did he intimate as he gave his other commands, “You men may play at doing this, but really it takes a soldier to succeed”? If this was his meaning, certainly it put us on our mettle. What he gave us were the facings and the steps and marchings, the simple movements by fours, guiding and dressing. When we blundered, there was his little concealed smile to make us swear to do the thing right next time. As we marched he kept pace with us, and then all his languor was gone. His step was springy, his arms swung, his eye roved up and down the line, and he snapped out his “One, two, three, four!” each like a little pistol shot. Remarked Corder, beside me, “His time is absolutely perfect—do you notice?” I had noticed. The sergeants tried to imitate his

counting, but compared to him they were hoarse and spiritless.

And he was only our lieutenant! The first sergeant called him such, in answering a question; and then I noticed the single bar on his collar. What would the captain be like?

The bugle blew Recall, and it was very welcome. We were marched back to the company street and dismissed. My rear rank man was one Pickle, a hardware clerk from a town in central Pennsylvania, who never in his life saw a big league baseball game, and yet can tell you the names and records of all the chief players, especially of the Brooklyns, for which club he is a rooter. He said of the lieutenant: “One of those wiry wonders, Tireless Thomas of the Training-field. Doesn’t he never remember that we are flesh and blood? Me for my little cot!” Following his example, more than half of the squad lay down till roused by the news that our rifles were being served out. So we flocked out in haste to get what would give us lamed shoulders and tired arms. Being thus roused, I next went for a swim in the lake, which was stony and cold and altogether invigorating.

The lieutenant had us out again in the afternoon, us and the guns. Consequently we were put through the manual of arms until the anticipated lameness is now a reality, not only of the arms but of the whole body. I find it is not enough to shift your rifle according to prescribed motions; it must be snappy, and in cadence. “Like a clock-work,” muttered Pickle in despair. And it is a crime to drop a rifle. Its first commission roused our lieutenant from his languor. “Who dropped that piece?” he thundered. Then he

outpoured contempt. “There’ll be glue on little Willie’s fingers next time, sure,” whispered Pickle.

Tired at the end of the day, I yet feel virtuous, having devoted to my country a pound of my flesh. I write by lantern light in the tent, there having been no conference tonight on account of rain. Most of the squad are away, exploring the city; but Corder is already abed and sleeping—“as insurance,” he said to me, explaining his middle-aged caution. I shall follow him soon. Good-night from

Dick.

Postscript, written Saturday morning at 5.30, waiting for breakfast.

We have in our squad one Randall, a person of recent Yale extraction—though (having good Yale friends) I don’t lay it up against the college. Yesterday he established his bed in the corporal’s place, which so far the rest of us had modestly avoided; and he fell foul of young David ten minutes after he had come among us. The two are evidently the youngest of us, with “college” sticking out all over them, and so might naturally draw together. But there is a still more natural antagonism between them, of the thoroughbred for the mongrel. For young Farnham, in spite of his effeminacy, has the instincts of his ancestors; and Randall, in spite of a magnificent physique, carries round with him something that says to David, “Don’t trust him!” What makes personality? I declare I cannot put my finger on the thing that makes me sure that Randall is yellow; but David has seen it, and has drawn back from it. Ninety-nine Yale men may slang Harvard, and the Harvard man will take it in good part—and *vice-versa*; but Randall is the

hundredth, and he said a few things that made David tremble, not with anger but with disgust. “Have a cigarette?” asked Randall at the end. “No, thanks,” answered David.—“Oh, he doesn’t smoke!” cried the other. “I do,” said David, and lit his own cigarette. I’m sorry for it. Probably Randall can make David pay for this declaration of war. Yet I’m glad too. And you should have seen Knudsen’s eye flash, and then soften as he looked at the young fellow.

War has been continuing these last few minutes. In the most ridiculous way David, after his shower bath, messed round with a shaving brush and a piece of soap, trying to get a lather on his face. Randall saw it first, and with roars of laughter called our attention to him. Corder, who instantly understood, quietly twinkled; but Knudsen wrinkled his brow at the boy. “Have you never done that before?” he demanded. Said innocent David, “I forgot to get my man to show me.” “Your *man*?” asked Knudsen. “His valet!” screamed Randall, overcome with the humor of the situation. Knudsen, never having been acquainted with the Harvard Gold Coast, showed in his keenly intelligent face first amazement, then disgust, then to my pleasure a kind of pity. In a moment he had both brush and soap in his hands, and soon plentifully lathered David. The boy then took his razor, one of the old style, and immediately gashed himself.

With indulgent impatience Knudsen took the razor, sat the boy down, and muttering to himself that he’d never tried this job before, skilfully shaved one half of David’s face, at each moment explaining the use of the weapon. “Why didn’t you get a safety razor?” he demanded. The lad answered, “My cousin Walter uses this kind.” I remember

that he used to idolize Walt, as all the younger fellows did; if he still has some of the feeling there's hope for him. Knudsen made him shave the other half of his face himself —a botched job, but still David finished it. Randall remarked that safety razors were best for girls, and when David finally emerged fresh, pink, and handsome in spite of his wounds, Randall said, "Now you're yourself again, Miss Lucy."

The boy's face is very sensitive; I saw that he was more hurt than angry, and he flushed deeply with the pain of it. It was Knudsen who was angry, but he said nothing. Corder still watched quizzically. I know that the title will stick. It is not ten minutes since the word was uttered, and we are already taking it up as David's name. Randall uses it flagrantly, the rest of us as a matter of course, all except Knudsen. "Come on, Lucy," he said just now when the first call for assembly sounded, and with his hand on David's shoulder he went with him into the street, protectively, I think.

I shall close this and send it off. Again love from

Dick.

Private Richard Godwin to His Mother

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Saturday, Sep. 9, 1916.

At the Y.M.C.A. Nearing 9 P. M.

Dear Mother:—

My tremendous postscript of this morning has somewhat led me out of the order of the day. I found myself awake at reveille, and rolled willingly out of bed. At the spigot, the

one and only article of convenience at the lower end of the company street, I found a helpful comrade who gladly soused me from a bucket, and the day was begun. Back in the tent I found the fellows slowly coming to consciousness, all except that accurate and careful elder, Corder, who was dressing with great preciseness after a shower bath, and was calmly pleased at having no particular symptoms of old age to report. He and I have a valuable distinction as the only men in the squad with foresight enough to have been *typhinated*, worth while on this day when the others must submit to inoculation, if they want to run no risk on the hike. Then David's shaving, as described. It was cold when we finally turned out, and our humane lieutenant, placing himself on a table at the head of the street, while we in open formation faced him, put us through setting-up exercises that warmed us sufficiently to brave the chilly mess-shacks for our breakfast.

It was there that David found me out. He first got my given name, Richard. Then he made me acknowledge that I was in Harvard, 1910. At the next pause he said, "My cousin Walter Farnham was in that class." "Yes," said I, and talked to the man on my other side. That stumped David, that anyone should know his cousin Walt and not be eager to talk about him. He did not approach the subject again till he and Knudsen and I and Corder were together in the tent. Then he put it right up to me. "Weren't you my cousin's best man?" "I was," said I, and Sick Call having just blown, I went out, saying that I wanted to see who answered it. I know Knudsen and Corder looked at me hard; as for David, he cried out, "Oh, I beg your pardon!" I have reasoned out that

with his delicate social perceptions and the stock of gossip that his mother supplies him with, he must have concluded that I was not in the mood to talk of weddings; but the real fact is that I don't intend to be enlisted as his nurse. As for the other side of it, I know I can depend on him not to tell the others about Vera and me.

When I came back, it being about time for drill, I found him explaining that while of course he'd not had his "man" at college, he always used a barber there. The man, I'm sure, was with him at all other times. Then when we fell in I heard a fellow from another squad call David Lucy. That was Randall's doing. Presently it will be all up and down the street. But Randall will be the only one to have any feeling about it. With the others now it is a matter of course, even with David himself.

Our morning's work began on the drill-field, with its open drainage trenches yawning for our feet and its scattered mounds to stumble on. Gay work, this learning to walk in the right place, stand in the right way, toss your nine pound rifle about as if it were a straw, and all with but a moment or two for thought between the first order and the second. Even Pickle was silent this morning, intent like the rest of us on his job. We are all so green that, except for the occasional old-timer, no one was giving his neighbor any advice.

Then on a sudden we were tested. "All who have had any previous experience" were required to step one pace to the front. There were not many of them. Then "all who wish to be corporal," or words to that effect. With about half the company I took the forward pace. The lieutenant separated

these goats from the humbler sheep, sent us under a sergeant to another part of the field, and himself took charge of the remainder. The sergeant divided us up into twos and set us by turns to drilling each other, evidently to test our knowledge and our ability to give commands.

Pickle was my victim, or I was his. We eyed each other doubtfully. “You begin,” said I. “No, you,” retorted he. “Gee, what a gink I was to think I wanted to be corporal!” So I tackled the job; and of course, not being used to it, I made long pauses between the commands, gave them wrong, could not assume a proper military accent. It’s not so easy. I have heard, in the armory at Boston, a militia captain (*captain*, mind you!) give the command “Attention!” in three different ways, continually experimenting. So how could I, for the first time in my life, rap out my orders like a veteran? What we had to do was absurdly simple; but poor Pickle, when I balked, succeeded no better than I, so finally we fell to consulting each other about it and became idle, like other groups that we saw. Then came our way another pair, who being as experienced as we are green, speedily took us in charge and manhandled us almost as skilfully as the lieutenant. I presently saw our West Pointer observing the drilling groups, and with him another with two bars on his collar, the same erectness, and the same natural air of knowing his business. The two were like farmers judging cattle, disposing of each one with swiftness, taking rapid notes, and then herding us together into our original ranks for a final shaking down. The captain disappeared, but I hoped he was to be ours, for though I had had but sidewise