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***LIFE IN THE WAR  
ZONE***

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# **Life in the War Zone**

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PARIS, August 8, 1916.



France to-day is sharply divided into two sections; within the greater you can come and go almost as freely as before the war. All that is necessary is a *sauf conduit* easily obtained from your *commissaire de police*, which you are never called upon to exhibit. But the other, the *Zone des Armées*, in common parlance the war or military zone! There is only one thing in France more difficult of contact, and that is a member of the middle or lower bourgeoisie.

For nearly three months now I have felt like an inverted snob trying to ingratiate myself with, or even to meet members, of that curious caste which exists only in France; a caste reserved, proud, suspicious, intensive, detesting foreigners only less than it does the aristocracy, and averse from variety of any sort. If you bring even one letter to society, either in France or any European capital, all doors are open to you, for society is accustomed to strangers and variety, and is often bored with itself; which the bourgeoisie, of France at least, never seems to be. So, if in the course of these and other letters, I allude, however casually, to princesses and duchesses, spare me the ready democratic sneer; but if, with affected indifference, I mention now and again a name without territorial significance, then, if you like, exchange derisive glances and exclaim: "Aha! So she has 'got there' and would have us believe she takes it as a matter of course." However—to return to the war zone.

I made no attempt to enter this proscribed region for six or seven weeks after my arrival, having the thousand and one phases of woman's work in the war to examine. But when these researches drew to a close I began to plot to get to the front—no other word is applicable unless a woman happens to be a Red Cross nurse. At first I applied to a number of eminent Americans on more or less intimate terms with the powers. I quickly found that, amiable and interested as they were, their own powers had a limit. It was comparatively easy in the beginning of the war to go to the front, but the barrier grows deeper every day.

One referred me to a Frenchman of great influence who has a special liking for Americans. He told me in the friendliest manner that when I obtained permission to go to the front he would provide me with the necessary letters, but that as I was an American I must obtain that permission through my embassy. This I did not even consider. I have spent a good part of my life in Europe, and long since came to the conclusion that all American embassies feel they are created for is to look solemn and important and give receptions. They never by any chance do anything for other Americans except in times of extreme danger, and then they behave very well.

I tried one or two members of the haute bourgeoisie without avail, and then took my troubles to a duchess. There I was more fortunate. The young Duchess d'Uzès has turned her castle near Amiens into a hospital, the sixth or seventh she has established since the beginning of the war, and is therefore on friendly terms with the Service de Santé (the Military Hospital Service Board). She asked one of its